The Love Letters: Saint Francis and Saint Clare of Assisi Meet Pope Francis
By Bruce Davis, Ph.D

A Charming, Soaring Fictional and Spiritual Dialogue with a Deeper Purpose:
A Discourse on Whether Pope Francis Can Truly Return the Church to the Saints’ Ideal—
a Humble, Compassionate, Uplifting Embrace of the World’s Poor and the Heart in Everyone.

Bespeaks the Deep Love of God, Man and Nature on Every Page

As the world watches with curiosity and admiration, as Pope Francis tries to turn around the Catholic Church, one might wonder what the beloved Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Clare might have thought of this Herculean effort. After all, they were among the first to call for a simple, unembellished church that teaches the love of all things, cares for the sick, the poor while touching the heart of joy in all.

And that’s precisely what bestselling author Bruce Davis, Ph.D. wondered…which is how he came to write the beautiful, moving and charming book The Love Letters: Saint Francis and Saint Clare of Assisi Meet Pope Francis (Grave Distractions Publications).

This tender tome—that bespeaks the deep love of God, Man and Nature from every page—purports to be letters between the two saints as they discover to their delight that a new Bishop of Rome has arrived carrying forth their ideals. Who is he? And can he succeed…truly bring about the radical change that’s necessary and end two millenniums of pomp and circumstance, returning the church to its spiritual essence of simplicity and compassion?

A leading secular expert on Saint Francis and author of the highly regarded Simple Peace – the Inner Life of St Francis, Davis has followed the footsteps of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi—having lived in Assisi, Italy for many years. People of all religions and from many countries have joined Bruce in retreats since 1983 on the hills and monasteries where Francis & Clare found inner peace and their great love of God. The many years of retreats makes Bruce uniquely qualified to capture these special saints and their reverence for all things divine, their joy in the simple moments of daily life, and their devotion to all living creatures. In real life, St. Francis and St. Clare did in fact, have a soaring love for each other and their shared love of God.

The Love Letters takes us deeply and joyfully into the spiritual minds and hearts of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi. Davis seeks to bring them alive through their own voices, as they travel their own unique paths to their own destinies. They write letters to each other on the many gifts of love and peace in the moment, as well as matters that trouble them and plague the church (and still do today). The Love Letters are about facing their own inner hopes and challenges, including St. Clare letting go of her dream of traveling the countryside with St. Francis and St. Francis’ experiences in the Holy Land during the crusades. They succor each other, they celebrate together, they urge their brother the Pope to pay attention to the needs of the poor and the cries of the heart in everyone—for a living church that embraces a God that dances for life, for joy in everyone!

Says Davis, “The Love Letters hopes to support the remarkable events happening with new Pope Francis, the Church, indeed the world, so many can come to know this love including its humility, service, and grace.”
Bruce Davis, a globally respected psychologist, has spent the last three decades promoting the inner peace that was the cornerstone of these two saint’s lives. He and his wife Ruth began leading retreats in 1983, and eventually came to open the Assisi Retreat Center, which was called one of the world’s 10 best by both Travel and Leisure Magazine and CNN. Today, they operate Silent Stay, a new retreat center on a stunning hillside near Napa, California, where many come to turn off their electronic tethers for mediation, quiet and inner exploration.

Davis is considered one of the world’s leading authorities on the gifts of silence, and living a simple life. His other bestselling books include The Magical Child Within You, The Heart of Healing, Monastery Without Walls, My Little Flowers, and The Calling of Joy. He is currently a frequent contributor to Huffington Post, as well as a host of other spiritual and ecological publications.

The Love Letters may be a lovely and entertaining work of fiction, but it has much more on its mind. This fast read—only 100 pages—is read by many individuals and groups slowly as a daily meditation and inspiration. It is destined to make your own heart soar and engage you in the vision held by these two saints—and the new pope—as he tries to change the Church and the world.

The Love Letters: Saint Francis and Saint Clare of Assisi Meet Pope Francis (retail priced at $11.99) is available at Amazon.com or www.GraveDistractions.com. It is also on Kindle for $5.99.
Excerpt from The Love Letters: Saint Francis and Saint Clare of Assisi Meet Pope Francis

Eight hundred years ago two young people left behind the expectations of their families and neighbors and set out for a life of following their heart. Francis and Clare were typical youths of their time. Francis a troubadour, Clare a pretty young woman, like teenagers of any generation, they yearned for a life of adventure. Against their family’s wishes, they moved outside the walls of their small town of Assisi, Italy and lived nearby in the beauty of nature. Their thirst for something true, propelled them to seek a life which they could call their own, a life without borders and boundaries. Francis did not want to merely follow his father’s commands while working in the family clothing shop. Clare did not want to be given away in a marriage to some stranger. Francis and Clare were young and in love with love. Each of them saw something pure in the heart of the other.

As Francis and Clare explored the world around them, they listened to their hearts. The love they recognized in each other began to grow within themselves. They discovered what we know today is the mystic’s path. They found their lives would transcend normal desire and fear as a special peace and perfect joy grew inside. The simplicity and harmony of nature encouraged them to embrace their own simple being. Step by step as they followed their hearts, their trust in life itself, in God, became stronger. This God was not something limited to the bricks and stones, the ritual and ceremony of Church but was found mysteriously everywhere, in everything, and in everyone. The quest was to have an open heart, to be available to the magnificence of the moment. God was discovered in the small things, the little flowers of ordinary life. Preparing food, making shelter, and sharing it with the less fortunate, they found peace, a simple peace more beautiful than they had ever imagined.

Of course the path was not so easy. They also found hardship, cold, rejection, everything that comes when you follow your heart in a world that does not believe. The only way to survive life’s difficulties was to also love the challenges. This became the secret to their success. They sought to love that which was most difficult to love. The resulting compassion and joy was to become the foundation of their eventual fame. The small human heart finding such a great love inspired many new brothers and sisters in their time and has continued to call people of all religions and no religion ever since. Riches and power have little value in comparison to the treasure of the heart. Francis and Clare followed love to wherever it would lead them. The result was a love story which has inspired lovers and saints forever since.

The Love Letters of Francis and Clare is a fictional account of their correspondence. They did not actually have such letters although Clare did correspond to many in the form of letters. Francis was more quiet, writing an occasional canticle which expressed his soul and joy. The general plot of their stories and compassion has been documented by many. The idea of meeting a new Pope, who takes on the heart and path of Francis is of course fiction. It took eight hundred years for a new Pope to have the courage and wisdom to name himself after St. Francis of Assisi and try to walk in his footsteps.

In the fictional world of The Love Letters, Francis and Clare hear there is a new Pope. As word travels through the small villages of Italy, it is said the new Pope is a follower of Francis. What can this mean for the powerful and out of touch Church? There is a new bishop of Rome who is not like all the others. This Pope feels the hunger and love of the people. This Pope knows that humility is the true path to God. Francis and Clare write each other letters back and forth sharing their hopes and dreams. Can the new Pope open the doors to the Church to include and serve the poor, those in need? Can the new Pope restore God in the heart where He truly resides in everyone? The world is ready for the prayer so dear to the heart of Francis. Each of us are called to become instruments of peace and healing for ourselves and for many.