

A Champion for Those in Need



MELINDA COLLINS, SPIRIT JUICE STUDIOS

Alicia Torres, FE

Last November, a young woman walked into Food Network's kitchen on the set of its popular *Chopped* program and, three delicious courses later, won the intense cooking competition and its \$10,000 prize. What to do with the money? A trip to Europe? A chic new wardrobe to flaunt? Perhaps she could pay off some of her student loans with the cash.

The answer is none of the above for Franciscan Sister Alicia Torres, FE. Sister Alicia brought the \$10,000 back to the Mission of Our Lady of the Angels in Chicago, where over 700 families are served. The money was put toward purchasing items for their food pantry and other pressing needs. Sister Alicia's bold and giving spirit is nothing new, however.

Sister Alicia was born in 1984 on the island of Terceira, Portugal, and grew up on the move in a Navy family. Eventually settling on the East Coast, Sister Alicia remembers prayer being a major part of her childhood. "I especially remember how anxious I was to receive my first Communion, and how, as a little girl, I always looked forward to going to church," she says.

"I was drawn [to the Franciscans] by the life of prayer and service. I had been attracted during my college years to eucharistic adoration, which played a key role in my discernment," Sister Alicia recalls. She joined the Franciscans of the Eucharist in 2009, and took her first vows in October 2012. Before Sister Alicia could take her vow of poverty, though, she had to pay off her student loan debt—like many millennials who face sizable student loans in a struggling economy. She was forced to think outside the box to solve her problem.

Even though she only ran cross-country in high school for one year, Sister Alicia started training for the Chicago Half Marathon as part of a fund-raising campaign called the Nun Run. The pledges people made to the Nun Run helped pay off her high-interest loans.

Now living out her vocation at the Mission of Our Lady of the Angels, Sister Alicia oversees all the food that is donated to their pantry and distributed to her "neighbors," the needy. Her approach to her vocation is simple: "to be the sister of every person I encounter!" The mission serves meals to

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STORIES FROM OUR READERS

Spreading the Word about St. Anthony

Several years ago, my husband, Jack, and I visited one of our daughters, who was teaching English in China. We purchased nonstop airline tickets for a flight from Newark, New Jersey, to China. As we were sitting at our gate, I saw a sign across the way that I wanted to read and put on my glasses. I could not see well out of one of the lenses and took them off to clean it. To my surprise, the lens was missing! After checking our current area, we decided to walk back to the place where we went through security. I asked St. Anthony to help me. A TSA agent was kind enough to allow me to go back through the security line to look for the lens. After looking as hard as we could, we gave up and started walking back to our gate. Then we saw the TSA agent running to catch up with us. He had found the lens, and I got to tell him about St. Anthony!

—Marybeth Nowicki, Bedford, New Jersey

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anywhere from 50 to 1,500 people, with the Christmas meal being the largest event.

So, what does it take to win *Chopped*? Beyond culinary talent, Sister Alicia brings a calm that can only come from her deep faith. “I am not anxious about the future, as I know it is in God’s hands,” she says. In preparation for her appearance on the show, she prayed fervently and asked Jesus for help. “When I got on the set, I was flooded with confidence and had no fear. I knew the Lord was with me,” she recalls.

The judges were floored by her food offerings, which included a turkey quesadilla with cranberry sauce. Twitter was set afire with tweets about the “cooking nun.” In response to her win, the Mission of Our Lady of the Angels tweeted, “It’s going to help the poor! Thanks be to God! We need new plumbing!”

After the thrill of victory fades, though, Sister Alicia’s passion for her faith and vocation remains most important for her. “My role is just to do my best to serve in the ways I am asked, trusting that the Lord will never abandon his people,” she says.

—Daniel Imwalle

ST. CLARE OF ASSISI

Eyewitness Stories

Two months after Clare died, Pope Innocent IV asked the bishop of Spoleto to collect testimonies about Clare’s holiness. Twenty witnesses described her virtues. Most of them were nuns at San Damiano, some who had known her before she moved there. Four laymen and one laywoman also testified.

The “Process of Canonization” text was discovered only in 1920 by Zefferino Lazzeri, OFM, and is printed in *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, translated and edited by Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap (New City Press). —P.M.



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To learn more about Franciscan saints, visit SaintoftheDay.org.

ST. ANTHONY BREAD

The National Shrine of St. Anthony is located in Cincinnati, Ohio. Consecrated in 1889, it includes a first-class relic of St. Anthony and serves as a center for daily prayer and contemplation.

The Franciscan friars minister from the shrine. To help them in their work among the poor, you may send a monetary offering called *St. Anthony Bread*. Make checks or money orders payable to “Franciscans” and mail to the address below.

Every Tuesday, a Mass is offered for benefactors and petitioners at the shrine. To seek St. Anthony’s intercession, mail your petition to the address below. Petitions are taken to the shrine each week.

To post your petition online, please visit stanthony.org, where you can also request to have a candle lit or a Mass offered; or you may make a donation to the Franciscans or sign up to receive a novena booklet.



Send all postal communication to:
St. Anthony Bread
1615 Vine St.
Cincinnati, OH 45202-6498

PHOTO BY FRANK JASPER, OFM