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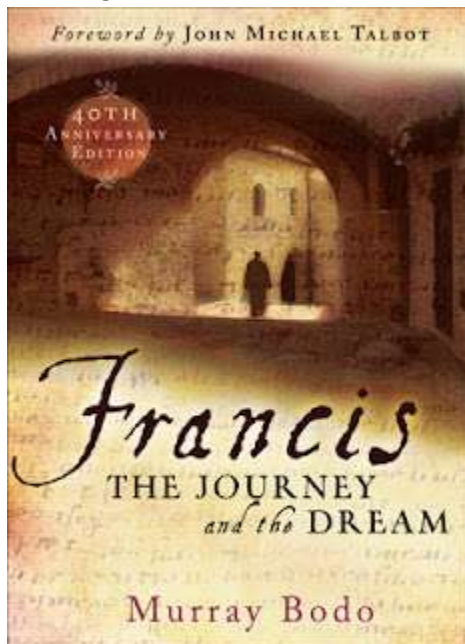
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### Creativity Interview: Father Murray Bodo, OFM

Father Murray Bodo, a fellow Southwesterner though he has lived in Cincinnati for many years, is a treasured friend. All of us lucky enough to know Murray personally treasure him not only as a fine and prolific writer but as a raconteur who makes us laugh, and as a wise, compassionate and devout man. Welcome to Bookjoy Creativity Salon, dear Murray!



**1. Little Louis Bodo who grew up in Gallup, New Mexico, now annually spends time in Italy. How did that happen and how has it affected your life and your writing?**



MB: The first time I went to Italy was on a mission from my Franciscan Province to write a book about St. Francis. That was in 1972, and the book was [\*Francis: The Journey and the Dream\*](#). A fortieth anniversary edition of that book is now available

from St. Anthony Messenger Press. Then in 1976 I began leading pilgrimages as a staff member of [Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs](#). I've been going to Italy for a couple of months in the summer or fall for 35 years now; it's like a second home to me, especially Assisi where I continue to be inspired by the life and times of St. Francis and by the beauty of the Umbrian countryside and the enchanting streets of Assisi.

**2. You were a teacher and professor for many years. Now you lead retreats. Do you miss teaching and what is the challenge of leading a retreat well?**

MB: I do miss teaching. I taught for 36 years and loved my years in the classroom. But in 2002 I asked to be relieved of that ministry to devote my time to [writing](#) and leading pilgrimages. Interestingly, the challenges of a good retreat or pilgrimage are much the same as those of teaching: thorough and ongoing preparation, interesting delivery and lively inter-acting with the group; and, for me, prayer - my own and those supporting me and the retreatants, or pilgrims, with their prayers.

**3. I believe I met you in 1989 in Cincinnati. During those 22 years, you have always been writing new poems and working on two to three books at a time. You amaze me. What keeps you writing at such a pace?**

MB: I was asking myself that same question lately. For one thing I love writing and don't know what I would do if I couldn't write. And secondly, because of my age, I may be writing against time, trying to be an instrument of God's Spirit while I still have it in me to create. But most of all, it is because writing is something I just have to do to be me. It's intimately a part of my identity.

**4. Have you always thought of yourself as creative? How do you nurture your creative life?**

MB: I was the kind of kid who, as far back as I can remember, was always performing improvised skits for whoever could endure my extemporaneous plays. But it wasn't till I was in high school that I discovered poetry as a creative outlet for me. Poetry, both reading it and writing it, gives me life; and I nurture that creative outlet by reading poets who stimulate my own writing and by walking, observing, meditating on the world around me and within me. I wait for a line, an image, or word to come to me.

**5. What are your new writing projects?**

MB: At present I'm completing a new book of poetry, *Something Like Jasmine*, which will be released by [Tau Publishing](#) in early 2012. I'm also working on the introductions for a St. Francis Day Book, which I'm co-authoring for St. Anthony Messenger Press with Pat McCloskey, a Franciscan confrere. In addition, I'm writing a small pamphlet on Pilgrimage that will be published by Abbey Press in their Prayer Notes series.

**6. What makes *Father Murray laugh?***

MB: Usually, its human nature and the goofy, inconsistent things we all do, especially when we're trying to be serious, and instead we tickle someone's funny bone. But animals and birds make me laugh even more. I love to observe their antics, their play, and their inexhaustible curiosity.

