

# Dick McCloskey

by  
KAREN CLIFFORD

**A**erial photographer Dick McCloskey sees things from a different angle than most of the general population as he flies in an aircraft in the skies of Indiana and Michigan. In the past few years, McCloskey has also viewed his faith from a different angle, with a perspective from the teachings of the Secular Franciscan Order.



Dick standing in front of the airplane he uses for his business, AeroVison Aerial Photography, a division of R.E. McCloskey and Associates, a real estate appraisal and consulting firm.

McCloskey is a cradle Catholic who was, by his own admission, a very lukewarm Catholic for many years.

"After my daughter, Katie, died in the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center buildings in New York City on September 11, 2001, I found very little solace in the Catholic Church. I never lost my faith in God, but I had absolutely no interest in the Church and became very arrogant in my attitude toward Her teachings and practices," says McCloskey.

McCloskey's journey to becoming a Secular Franciscan began in October 2005, when he and his wife Anne joined fellow parishioners from St. Pius X in Granger, Indiana on a pilgrimage to Italy.

"Toward the end of this two-week adventure we stopped in Assisi. We were sitting in the crypt of the Basilica of Saint Francis, waiting for the chapel to become available upstairs where our group was to have a private Mass.

As I was looking around the crypt, I saw the sarcophagus that contains the remains of Saint Francis above the altar. A very strange feeling came over me," says McCloskey.

He continues, "I sensed a presence, but I did not hear anything. However, I clearly received a message telling me that I needed to get my spiritual life back in order. For the remaining days of the pilgrimage I was very confused.

I knew that my spiritual life was a mess, but I didn't know what to do about it."

His encounter at the crypt of Saint Francis had a huge impact on his faith journey.

"When we came home I made an appointment with Father Bill Schooler to go to confession. My last confession had been in 1963, 42 years previously," McCloskey explains. A relative on Anne's side of the family is a Secular Franciscan.

McCloskey told this relative of the experience he had at St. Francis' crypt and she invited him to the Secular Franciscan meeting at the convent in Mishawaka, Indiana.

During that meeting, he felt the same presence he had experienced at Assisi. "I just knew that St. Francis was leading me back to Christ and the Church," he recalls.

McCloskey entered the formation process in April 2006 and made his profession in the Secular Franciscan Order on July 12, 2008. He is currently the formation director of the Immaculate Conception Fraternity in Mishawaka.

The qualities of simplicity, a spirit of poverty, love of the poor and devotion to Jesus through His Blessed Mother found in the Order fit McCloskey's persona, he emphasizes.

"Franciscans are intensely spiritual in a laid-back, joyful way.

We support each other spiritually in our individual ministries. We are all about looking for Christ in other people and in each other.

Franciscans are people of service. We find Christ in others by serving them," he says.

Among McCloskey's paid vocations is his 36 year career as a real estate appraiser. In 1998, he learned to fly small airplanes and now holds a private pilot certificate with instrument and sea plane ratings. This eventually led him to put aerial photos in his appraisal reports.

"I thought that I might be able to combine flying with aerial photography to support my flying hobby. I started AeroVision Aerial Photography in 2002 as a result of this thought process."

As an aerial photographer McCloskey sells his photos to various markets, including real estate brokers and developers, construction companies, government agencies and various individuals.



Demonstrating how he takes aerial photography through the window of his high-wing Cessna 172 aircraft.

Faith also impacts his aerial photography business. "It allows me to take off from terra firma in a small airplane knowing that God will take good care of us.

I have been able to use my photography to support good causes. I have also given many samples of my photography for silent auctions to raise money, such as for The Center for the Homeless, St. Monica's Home and School Association, and Habitat for Humanity in the South Bend, Indiana area."

McCloskey stresses that God is always at the center of his vocations and his desire to be of service to others.

"After 35 years as a piece of spiritual driftwood, I guess God realized I was never going to come back to Him without some drastic intervention on His part.

Our Lord realized Saint Francis' talent for bringing people close to Him, and He put him to work on my case. I am eternally grateful for God's unique intervention in my life."



Fraternity Minister Cyndi Pilot, SFO; and Dick McClosky, Formation Director prepare for the Order's Mass of Profession at St. Francis Convent in Mishawaka, Indiana on October 9, 2010.

—Karen Clifford is a freelance writer for *Today's Catholic*, a weekly newspaper from the diocese of Fort Wayne/South Bend, Indiana.

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