

Spring, 2021

Volume 2, Issue 1

The Troubadour

Newsletter of the Franciscan Tertiaries of
the Province of the Immaculate Conception



Our Franciscan Progress

There are a lot of activities on the horizon in our community! Check out the articles in this edition of the newsletter to find out more!



We have entered the liturgical season of Lent. We Franciscans do not look on it as a sad time, but more of a period in which we can perfect ourselves as Catholics and as members of the Third Order. Some priests advise us not so much

to deny ourselves, but to improve some aspect of our lives, and in some way benefit others – which is not only practical, but joyful!

Last year we started on our long, worldwide focus on the COVID virus and what we must do to keep ourselves and others healthy. We are in a better place this year! Thanks be to God, our parishes are not closed down as they were in 2020, between March 16 and May 25. If nothing changes, we will be able to physically attend devotions such as Stations of the Cross, and of course, Mass at our parishes. For those of us who are not comfortable with attending in person (with the dispensation still in place at this writing,) we now know how to access Mass online and via television. We are blessed, indeed!

God bless us all, and may we find joy in discerning the mission God has given us in our vocation as faithful Third Order Franciscans!

Spiritual Director

Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM
Shrine of
Our Lady Comforter
of the Afflicted, Youngstown



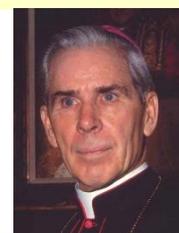
Editor

Susan Kramer, TOF

Catholic Quote of the Month

*“When we die to something, something comes alive within us.
If we die to self, charity comes alive; if we die to pride, service comes alive;
if we die to lust, reverence for personality comes alive;
if we die to anger, love comes alive.”*

Venerable Fulton Sheen (1895-1979) – Archbishop, Broadcaster, Author, Teacher



Novice Pre-Profession Retreat



On March 13, 2021, our novices will attend a “Pre-Profession Retreat”. The theme for the retreat will be “Franciscan Tertiaries: *Longing for Perfection While Living in the World*” and will be held at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted in Youngstown. The day will begin with Mass at 9:00 AM, celebrated by Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM. The novices from all three fraternities will enjoy three presentations, along with table discussion. Eucharistic Adoration and Confession will be available midday for the novices.

As Article 26 of our Constitution states, “*In order to make their profession with greater fruit and fervor, the novices shall prepare themselves well for it, if possible, by first making a retreat.*” The time together, as they prepare for their permanent profession, will allow them to reflect and discern on the call to the Franciscan way of life. Please keep the novices in your prayers, as you have throughout their journey, as we look forward to their Profession on June 5, 2021.

Come and See



Franciscan Tertiaries of the Province of the
Immaculate Conception

“Come and See”

On January 18, 2021, the SS. Francis and Clare Fraternity hosted a “Come and See” at the home of Debbie Ventosa, TOF, Formation Director. The event was well-attended, with 13 guests who came to hear an introduction to the Third Order of St. Francis. There were also 7 members of the Fraternity, as well as Fr. Vit, who provided invaluable information about the Third Order. Ten of those present are currently attending Initial formation as they discern if they are being called to the Third Order. They are learning a brief overview of Franciscan history, signs, symbols, a brief biography of St. Francis and St. Clare, and learning to pray Lectio Divina.

New Brochures Available



We now have a brochure available with information about our community of Franciscan Tertiaries. We thank Chris Devore, TOF of the SS. Francis and Clare Fraternity for stepping forward to make the brochure and for the wonderful work he did. The brochure is available to place in parishes (with the pastor’s permission) and is a good resource to give to anyone you may be thinking about inviting to the Order. If you would like a copy, please contact your fraternity minister or Pepe Ventosa, TOF.

Welcoming New Isolated Tertiaries into the Franciscan Tertiaries of the OFM Province of the Immaculate Conception

On February 11, 2021, the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM established two new isolated Tertiaries into our community of Franciscan Tertiaries. They are Ericka Witover, TOF from Texas, and Linda Menser, TOF from California. They join the first isolated tertiary who came to us, Fr. Daniel Dozier, TOF of Olympia, Washington.

Ericka Witover, TOF was professed into the OFS in April, 1999 in the St. Anthony Fraternity of Manchester, New Hampshire, and discerned to transfer into our community of tertiaries. She has been married to her husband, Eric, for over 20 years this October. Ericka has a servant's heart, as you will find her assisting her husband with the care he requires. Together, they care for their two dogs, Blue and Tony.

A move to Texas in 2004 enabled her to continue sharing her gift of teaching as she served her OFS fraternities, first in New Hampshire and then in Dallas, Texas as their Formation Director. We have had Ericka join our Formation meetings via Facetime, and her input has been a blessing to those present.



Ericka is also gifted with creative writing skills. She is the author of a Catholic science fiction book that she looks toward publishing next year. Ericka has also authored two children's books to be ready for publication once the illustrator completes his portion. Reading books about spirituality and astronomy/stargazing keeps her eyes focused heavenward. Prayers for the success of these publications as they go to print are appreciated!

←Ericka Witover, TOF

Ericka's occupation as a medical coder, working remotely while juggling all these responsibilities, is remarkable. Her peaceful demeanor no doubt flows from her prayer life, and her favorite devotions are to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary – and of course, Litanies to St. Francis! She has studied the Rule and Constitution and shared that becoming associated with the TOF will help her become more diligent and devoted to a prayer life with the Rule that outlines just how to do that.

Linda Menser, TOF was professed into the OFS in May, 2019, and also discerned to transfer into our community. She has three sons and three young grandchildren, with one on the way. Linda, an energetic Army veteran and retired postal carrier, resides in California. Her sons are also veterans, two serving in law enforcement and one at the Veteran's Administration. Linda is privileged to care for her 90-year-old father, a Navy veteran, and lovingly assists her grandchildren as needed.

A pilgrim at heart, Linda visited Israel, Rome, and Assisi. In 2018, she also visited the USS Arizona in Pearl Harbor, as well as a memorable March for Life in Washington, DC, where President Trump addressed the Right to Life participants historically in person.

Linda enthusiastically describes her Franciscan mission as one of caring for her family, and defending the unborn who cannot speak for themselves. Eucharistic Adoration is central to her spirituality, and she signed up for Tuesdays and Fridays on the Eucharistic Adoration schedule of the SS. Francis and Clare Fraternity. Twice weekly, Linda is outside the local Planned Parenthood to peacefully pray and educate the abortion-minded with alternatives and resources.



**Linda Menser, TOF (in hat)
at the Wailing Wall,
Jerusalem →**

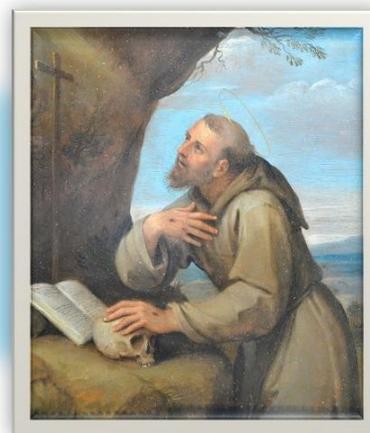
She loves to visit Prince of Peace Abbey, a Benedictine monastery in Oceanside, California. She has also developed a love for the Latin Mass. Reading and studying Scripture and Catholic books builds her faith, and the night sky, when it is filled with stars, reminds her of God's creative power! She is very appreciative of joining the community of Tertiaries of the Friars of the Immaculate Conception, and looks forward to eventually meeting many of us.

We thank the Holy Spirit for prompting Ericka's and Linda's hearts toward learning about and eventually joining our community. We are blessed from our sisters from out West!

Note: Although Isolated Tertiaries, due to a lack of a local fraternity, are not members of a fraternity, they are not really "isolated". They belong to the community of Franciscan Tertiaries of the OFM Province of the Immaculate Conception and are our brothers and sisters. We are connected spiritually by our desire and commitment to follow the life of the Gospel in the spirit of St. Francis according to the Rule of 1883, and physically, by the many ways of communication available nowadays.

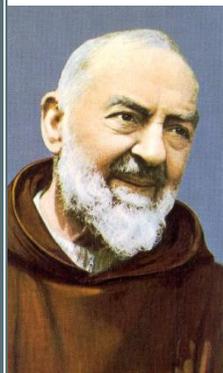
"It is, then, desirable that in every city, town, and even in each village, the Third Order count henceforth a sufficient group of members, not of inactive adherents satisfied with the mere title of Tertiaries, but instead, of those who spend themselves with zeal for their own salvation and the salvation of their brothers."

Pope Benedict XV- Sacra Propediem #14



The Apostolate of the St. Padre Pio Fraternity ***by Dr. Pat Cuttica, TOF – Minister***

There are actually two apostolates which identify the newly-founded Third Order Franciscan Fraternity of St. Padre Pio. These are service to the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted, and prayer.



Though our present fraternity has existed at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted for just over one year, the history of the Third Order of St. Francis at the shrine dates back to the mid-twentieth century. Over the years, these followers of St. Francis, in addition to their love of our seraphic father, have had one thing in common – their care of, and dedication to, the Shrine and its friars. From decorating and cleaning of the church, to helping with the care of the retreat house, planting summer flowers, and more, our Franciscans brothers and sisters are always ready to be of service to the Shrine. This readiness for service has evolved into a beautiful apostolate of our fraternity.

The second apostolate which marks our fraternity is that of prayer. Though prayer is a long-standing commitment of all Franciscans, our fraternity is embarking on a new commitment to prayer. In addition to our usual prayers, members of our fraternity will be praying in a special way for a particular need that is decided upon at our monthly gathering. The object of this prayer will change monthly as the need arises, and each member will discern the manner in which he or she will pray. This commitment will be above and beyond our members' usual prayer life.

Though members of our fraternity are involved with their own specific spiritual and corporal works of mercy, these identifying apostolates of the St. Padre Pio Fraternity will continue to define our fraternity as a whole as we walk together in the footsteps of St. Francis with Christ as the center of our lives.

A Blessing from Bishop Malesic of Cleveland

SS. Francis and Clare Fraternity Minister Bob Burtscher, TOF received a very welcome letter from Bishop Edward Malesic of Cleveland. His Excellency extends his blessing on the fraternity to function in the Diocese of Cleveland, and those in the fraternity could not be more pleased!

The SS. Francis and Clare Fraternity has a membership that mainly straddles the Dioceses of Youngstown and Cleveland in addition to their more distant members, Jennifer Kerns, TOF of Vienna, West Virginia, and Julia Tarulli, TOF of New Philadelphia.

Bishop Malesic of Cleveland, Bishop Bonnar of Youngstown, Bishop Lach of the Eparchy of Parma, and the bishops of our more distant members, as well as our cherished parish priests and Franciscan friars, remain in the prayers offered at daily Eucharistic Adoration, the fraternity's most vital apostolate. ***God bless and protect Bishop Edward Malesic and all our bishops!***



Holy Profession

Holy Profession of our novices will take place at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted on June 5. There are a total of 13 novices who will profess into the Third Order of St. Francis. This ceremony will be extra special as it will be the first Profession taking place in our new community of the Franciscan Tertiaries of the OFM Province of the Immaculate Conception.

Also, on June 5, we will celebrate the Investiture Ceremony of Jennifer Kerns, TOF and Julia Tarulli, TOF. Jenifer and Julia were professed into the OFS and transferred to our community of Tertiaries in November, 2020. Both are members of the SS. Francis and Clare Fraternity and will receive their new habits, the scapular and white cord. **As we pray for new vocations, we give thanks and praise to the Holy Spirit, Who continues to inspire others to look into the Franciscan way of life!**



“Every year in the month of January or of June, each fraternity shall publicly make or renew its solemn consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and in the month of May or December, its consecration to the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, using the approved prayers.”

Constitution Article 68

A Fraternal Reminder

Save the Dates!

3/6	Padre Pio Fraternity (Youngstown) Lenten Day of Recollection at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted
3/13	Pre-Profession Retreat for Novices at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted
4/4	Easter
6/5	Holy Profession of Novices at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted
6/5	Investiture Ceremony of Jennifer Kerns, TOF and Julia Tarulli, TOF
8/14	Padre Pio Fraternity (Youngstown) Picnic – All are invited!
8/15	SS. Francis & Clare Fraternity (Barberton) Picnic, Queen of Heaven Parish Pavilion, Uniontown – All are invited!
9/6	Franciscan Hike, Cuyahoga Valley National Park
11/13	Day of Recollection, Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted