



Soldiers of Christ

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

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Sandy Baden, TOF, Editor

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THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD



“So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God. But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.” (Mark 16: 19-20)

“Then he led them out as far as Bethany, raised his hands, and blessed them and was taken up to heaven. They did him homage and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy and they were continually in the temple praising God.”
(Luke 24: 50-53)

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the Apostles, and his disciples were there and watched as a cloud surrounds Jesus when they lost sight of him ascending into heaven. What were their thoughts at that very moment? For Mary, I am sure, must have been a little sorrow and maybe a wish she could go with Him, but her time on earth was not over. The Blessed Mother of God would continue to be a spiritual mediator to the Apostles in building our Lord’s Church. Mary’s role is a solid foundation of love in an imitation of Christ for all of us.

The Apostles and his disciples must have felt some form of emptiness and also joy at the same time, as one could imagine if you were there. All of them had walked and talked with Jesus. He taught them all they needed to know. The sorrow felt may have been that He was gone from them on earth, and the joy was what the future would bring. The expectation of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus had promised, and the beginning of the Holy Catholic Church.

The Ascension of Christ is the joining of the Holy Trinity in Heaven as Christ himself had illustrated at His Baptism with John the Baptist in the Jordan river. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all in one as Jesus ascends into heaven. What expectations did they question as they returned to Jerusalem with great joy and praising God?

Today, as we grow in our spiritual lives as Isolated Tertiaries we can know that Jesus is just as present to us as He was to the Apostles. Only our Lord Jesus Christ can come to us in the form of bread and wine in the Holy Eucharist, at the hands of a Priest, in the Holy Catholic Church. That is just as awesome as being there when Christ ascended into Heaven or at His birth.

As Easter approached and Lent ends we are reminded of the Passion of Christ and all that He suffered along with His Mother, The Blessed Virgin Mary. All this came to be because God loves us and gave us His son for our salvation. The celebration of "The Ascension of the Lord" is ever present. Christ will never leave us and through his mercy we will follow the example of the Apostles, and all of His saints into His Kingdom in Heaven, as each of us will find our own way in living as a Franciscan Tertiary.

In the Spirit of St. Francis,

Sandy Baden, TOF

"Almighty, eternal and merciful God, grant us in our misery and grace to do for you what we know you want us to do, and always pleases you. Thus, inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened, and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit, may we be able follow in the footprints of your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And, by your grace alone, may we make our way to you. Most High, who live and rule in perfect trinity and simple unity, and are glorified. God all-powerful, forever and ever. Amen!"

St. Francis of Assisi

LEADERSHIP MEETING WITH CONFRATERNITY OF PENITENTS

On March 29, 2022, a meeting took place at the Poor Clare Sancta Clara Monastery in Canton. Present were: Fr. Joseph Tuscan, OFM Cap., Spiritual Guardian of the Confraternity of Penitents (CFP) and retreat master, of Pittsburgh, PA; Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM, our Spiritual Director; Fr. Daniel Dozier, TOF, isolated tertiary and Byzantine Catholic priest, joining us via a Zoom call from Olympia, WA; Madeline and Jim Nugent from CFP, of Fort Wayne, IN; Pat Cuttica, TOF, Minister of Padre Pio Fraternity, of Youngstown; Jim Miller, TOF, Vice-Minister of St. Francis-St. Clare Fraternity of Barberton; Julie Pertz, TOF, Treasurer of Our Lady of America Fraternity of NE Ohio; and Pepe Ventosa, TOF, Councilor of St. Francis-St. Clare Fraternity of Barberton, and assistant to the isolated tertiary community.

After introducing ourselves and getting to know a little about each other, we discussed working together on the Confraternity's annual Retreat/Reunion/Conference that will take place October 26-30, 2022, at the Saint Felix Catholic Center. The Center is a Franciscan friary located at 1280 Hitzfield Street, Huntington, Indiana, 46750, @ 35 miles from Fort Wayne. Venerable Solanus Casey spent his last years there.

We brainstormed about the title, theme, and content of the retreat. Talks will be given by our priests and two Third Order members, with prayer services and daily Masses that hopefully will include the solemn Latin liturgy, Novus Ordo, and a Byzantine Akathist, a profound devotional poem to Saint Francis. The agenda hopes to support us along our journey of holiness. In addition to the speakers, a member of each fraternity (preferably the minister,) will be part of a panel in which they explain the origin and evolution of their respective fraternities.

The entire cost if you stay all four nights is \$200, plus \$25 towards food and beverages. A few members will cook our meals, which will allow abstinences and the schedule to be tailored to our needs. Overall we will gather Oct. 26-30th. We will end on Sunday with morning Mass to allow people to travel home without missing Monday work.

The retreat is open to Franciscan Tertiaries and any other member of the Third Order of Saint Francis; -- those in formation are especially encouraged to come. We hope you can join us for a "retreat, reunion and conference" this fall. If you have any questions in the meantime, please communicate with your Minister. Pax et bonum.



Sitting left to right: Pat Cuttica, TOF, Julie Pertz, TOF, Fr. Joe Tuscan, OFM Cap, Jim Nugent, CFP,

On Zoom call from Olympia, Wa.: Fr. Danial Dozier, TOF, Isolated Tertiary and Byzantine Catholic Priest.

Standing left to right: Pepe Ventosa, TOF, Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM, Jim Miller, TOF and Madeline Nugent, CFP

Written by: Julie Pertz, TOF

GETTING TO KNOW OUR NOVITIATES
George and Nadia Smith, TOF - By Debbie Ventosa, TOF



George and Nadia Smith are husband and wife Isolated Tertiary novices residing in Florida. They met working with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal in the Bronx. Nadia accepted George's marriage proposal during a Holy Hour where he read the Wedding Feast at Cana in the Scripture. Fourteen years of Marriage and blessed with three children, twelve, ten, and six years old, they both strive for holiness personally and in every day family life.

Franciscan spirituality runs in the family as George's great grandmother lived the St. Leo XIII rule as TOF and she died at Mass after receiving the Holy Eucharist. George is a member of the Cord Bearers of St. Francis and was searching for a community that lived the rule of Pope Leo XIII. Devine Providence led him to our website where he contacted the TOF and the journey for the two of them began. George brings with him his beautiful bride as well as his education

as an actor who holds a Master's in Theology, with a concentration in Bioethics and a Masters of Public Administration. He has shared his gifts with the Church serving in youth ministry, pro-life and chastity education just to name a few. George hopes that the TOF will be a means of holiness as he earnestly seeks to follow the will of God realizing we all struggle, but the goal is union with God.

Each person has a unique journey and Nadia was born into a family of a very devout Catholic mother and a Marxist atheist father, who is a doctor. Her father's residency landed him at the VA Hospital in the Bronx, where a Catholic chaplain priest, as well as Nadia's devout mother, stirred his intellectual curiosity and where conduits for his conversion. Nadia clearly recalled the radical shift in her home during the junior high years, where the Catholic faith was lived and taught with patience and guidance of her parents. Nadia attended the University of Wisconsin, Madison receiving her B.A. in International Relations with a concentration in journalism. She has a whirlwind work

history including Australia with an NGO, Rome during the Jubilee Year with JPII. As a Vatican Radio Journalist, (she was already fluent in English and Spanish, and learned Italian and Portuguese at this time), she came across to the U.S. for a marketing company, and in New York helping her brother in Real Estate. She worked for the Catholic Standard & Times, the official Archdiocesan newspaper at the time, where she started a Catholic young professionals group. She currently works as the Editor-in-Chief for The Pulse of Catholic Medicine, a publication of the Catholic Medical Association.

Nadia and George were married in the Cathedral Basilica of SS. Peter and Paul in Philadelphia. Cardinal Justin Rigali celebrated their wedding Mass, which was concelebrated by a number of their priest friends. Nadia accepted the invitation of George to look into the TOF and it is a means of holiness and restoration for her in her faith life and additional avenue of growth in the spiritual life for them as a couple. Please welcome George and Nadia Smith, who entered the Novitiate March 12, 2022.

Photo - Nadia, Fr. Eric Scanlan, and George at the Ceremony of Entrance into the Novitiate celebrated.

Tidbits from Ericka Witover, TOF, Formation Director of the IT's

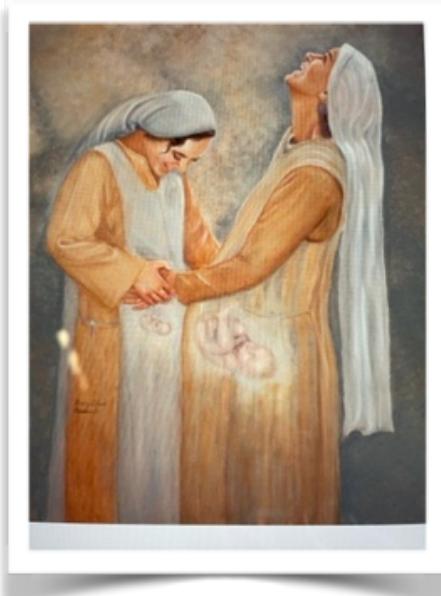
Since May is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us praise her together with Saint Francis in his own words.

SALUTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

Hail, holy Lady, most holy Queen, Mother of God, Mary who are ever Virgin, chosen from Heaven by the most Holy Father who He has consecrated with the most holy beloved Son and the Ghostly Paraclete, in whom was and is all the fulness of grace and all good. Hail thou His palace! 4 Hail thou His tabernacle! 5 Hail thou His house! Hail thou His garment! Hail thou His handmaid! Hail thou His Mother and all ye holy virtues which by the grace and illumination of the Holy Ghost thou infuses in the heart of the faithful, that from infidels ye mayest make them faithful to God.

THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Written by Sandy Baden, TOF



During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Juda, she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment of the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

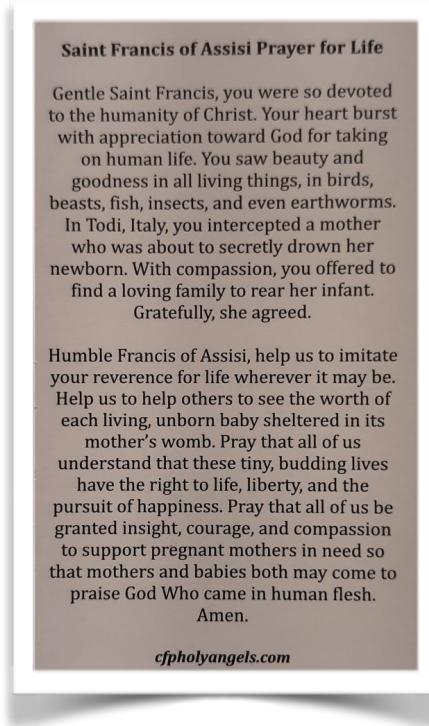
(Luke 1: 39-45)

Mary, the Mother of God, is always introducing us to her Son. In the visitation to Elizabeth, Mary introduces Christ to John. John the Baptist, the forerunner to the Son of God, is sanctified in the womb. Can you imagine Jesus and John speaking to each other as John leaps for joy during this greeting to his mother from Mary. Those who do not believe would say impossible and could not happen. This astonishing meeting between Mary and Elizabeth is so compelling to the imagination of our souls for us to see the awesomeness of God through our own gift of faith.

A doubting Thomas would need proof, 'unless I see I will not believe' (John 20: 25-26). All the events around the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary are taken in faith, the Incarnation, the dreams of Joseph to obey the call from God to take Mary as his wife, Zechariah not believing the Angel of the Lord, Gabriel, who appeared to him to announce his wife will bear a son, and you will name him John. Zechariah became mute until the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1: 5-25), and The Magnificat of Mary, which illustrates the glory of God in her faith (Luke 1: 46-56).

Some Apostles had doubts and disbelief in their journey with Christ, even after the Crucifixion of Christ on the road to Emmaus, until the breaking of the bread, Christ had revealed himself, (Luke 24: 13-32). Thomas did not believe until the appearance of Jesus in the upper room, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20: 28). Peter denied Christ three times before the Cock crows twice, (Mark 14:30), but at the same time, Christ tells us, ‘Your faith has saved you’ (Luke 7: 50).

The Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth shows us anything is possible with God. Christ tells us nothing will be impossible for us, even with a little faith, ‘Amen, I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, move from here to there....’ (Mathew 17: 20). This gift of faith, we have been given by the loving mercy of God, is a prayer that says we can move a mountain in our lives. It is an invitation to love God and each day increase our faith, keep the fire of the Holy Spirit burning in our hearts, and proclaim Christ is here and present. Our faith is believing in our Lord Jesus Christ as John the Baptist had proclaimed His coming when he preached in the desert, as he leaped for joy in his mother’s womb, and as he recognized Jesus in Mary’s greeting to his mother, Elizabeth.



Prayer submitted by Ericka Witover



“What wonderful majesty! What stupendous condescension! O sublime humility! That the Lord of the whole universe, God and the Son of God, should humble Himself like this under the form of a little bread, for our salvation.”

St. Francis of Assisi

Monday:	Judith Inglesby, TOF
Tuesday:	Linda Menser, TOF
Wednesday:	Luis Guzman, TOF
Thursday:	Paul & Mary Tag, TOF Sandy Baden, TOF
Friday:	Linda Menser, TOF
Saturday:	Ericka Witover, TOF
Sunday:	Linda Menser, TOF

Please include prayer for the intentions of our Pope, Bishops and Priests. Also pray for the Community of Friars of the Immaculate Conception Province for an increase in religious vocations in their Community, and all the intentions of the members of the Isolated Tertiaries Community.

(Contact Pepe Ventosa, if you would like to participate in Eucharistic Adoration.)

ADMONITION VIII

The Sin of Envy

Saint Paul tells us, “No one can say Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit” (Cor 12:3) and “There is none who does good, no, not even one” (Rom 3:12). And so when a man envies his brother the good that God says or does through him, it is like committing a sin of blasphemy, because he is envying God, who is the only source of every good.

Have we not at one time or another felt envy? However, when reading Lothar Hardick's, OFM explanation of Admonition VIII we must realize what we are thinking when we envy our neighbor. We must also acknowledge the redemption received from our Lord Jesus Christ. Here, we can see the example of Jesus as He healed the sick, loved all people He encountered, forgave sin, and went through His Passion unto death for us.

In our effort to look at “envy” we should first consider how grateful we should be for all that has been given to us from God. Then look at our neighbor and realize all that was given also came from God and there is no need to want more or ask why can't I have what the person next door has? Whatever is good comes from God and be thankful to Him, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The phrase, “wherever we encounter good—there is God! God makes use of men and women to say and do what is good!” Lothar Hardick states this to impress in our minds, and in our hearts, to reiterate and not question what God has given to one person or another. It may be difficult not to envy our neighbor sometimes, but maybe by repeating “wherever we encounter good—there is God,” we will remember everything good comes from God and be reminded of what we have is good and that would be enough for us. This sounds so easy, but is it?

In our world today we are being confronted or bombarded with commercials which try to imply what we need to make us happy or content in our lives. I say use the mute button and close our eyes. There is so much around us to misdirect our focus on what we should be taking into our hearts. The love and goodness of God. We can easily become blinded as our world is so volatile. Do we surrender or live apart from the chaos?

Lothar Hardick, OFM says “What is more, it is precisely in this way, that is, through prayer and contemplation, that our inner poverty, which must be free of all envy, will become an abundant source of true joy.” We should take this into our hearts and be thankful for what God has given us and live apart from the chaos of this world on earth. If we follow God’s will, the blessings would be in abundance and enable us to solve problems along with the atrocities that happen all around us and find our ‘source of true joy.’

Save the Date

May 5: IT Gathering, Zoom, 6:45 PM Eastern Time,
Mary Tag, Facilitator

May 8: Never forget Mother's Day

May 26: The Ascension of The Lord

May 31: The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary