

Winter, 2022

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The Troubadour

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



Keeping the Faith

The story of Venerable Matt Talbot is an excellent one to contemplate at the beginning of a new year. We often make resolutions to improve our lives now, which is a worthy endeavor.

Matt Talbot was an Irishman from Dublin, the second child of 12 in a poor family. His father and all his brothers except the eldest were alcoholics. At the age of 12, Matt left school and went to work for a wine merchant, and then on the docks for the whiskey board. He became a hopeless alcoholic in this atmosphere, sampling the goods at his job and visiting the pubs in the evening with his brothers and co-workers. He spent every penny on alcohol, even pawning his clothing and boots.

At the age of 28, after years of abusing alcohol and demeaning himself in the process – even resorting to stealing to pay for his addiction - he finally had enough and realized what he had to do. At Holy Cross College, with other suffering addicts, he “took the pledge”, renewing it at 6-month intervals for the rest of his life.

The first 7 years were particularly difficult. Matt turned to prayer and the Catholic Church for help, eventually becoming a Third Order Franciscan. For the next 40 years of his life, he attended daily Mass, received the Sacraments regularly, and lived very humbly in poverty, repaying all his debts and helping those in trouble. He was an especially hard worker, employed in manual labor on the docks. He incorporated prayer into his work life and into his free time, holding onto his Faith and Jesus tightly with both hands.

Matt collapsed and died while walking to daily Mass. Doctors found he had wound several chains around his waist and legs, which were not austerities so much as a personal devotion to Jesus and Mary. Those with addictions, particularly alcoholism, turn to Matt Talbot’s intercession.

May we find ways to grow closer to the Blessed Trinity and to put our Faith into action through our Franciscan vocation!

Spiritual Director

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



Editor

Susan Kramer, TOF

Franciscan Quote for Winter, 2022

“Three things I cannot escape: the eye of God, the voice of conscience, and the stroke of death. In company, guard your tongue. In family, guard your temper. When alone, guard your thoughts.”

Venerable Matt Talbot, TOF (1856-1925)

Third Order Franciscan, Recovered Alcoholic, Penitent, Laborer, Daily Mass-Goer



Franciscan Retreat, October 26-30, 2022 – by Virgil Daniel, TOF

Members of our Tertiary Community traveled to Huntington, Indiana, for a Franciscan Retreat hosted by the Confraternity of Penitents (CFP), a Franciscan community that seeks to live in their homes by the original Third Order Rule of 1221. We were also joined by members of Tau-Maria, another Franciscan community that follows a Rule devoted to consecration to the Blessed Mother. There was much to share and to learn.

Margaret Sartor, TOF from Our Lady of the Americas Fraternity and Julie Elkinton, TOF from Padre Pio Fraternity were in attendance, along with eight members of Ss. Francis and Clare Fraternity: Jim Miller, TOF, Vice Minister; Pepe Ventosa, TOF; Joanne Angeletti, TOF; Carol Perrine, TOF; Mike Butts, TOF; Virgildee and Louise Daniel, TOF; Jesse Kuhn, TOF. Our dear Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM, was also with us.



The Retreat took place at the St Felix Catholic Center, Huntington, Indiana, a repurposed Capuchin monastery, from October 26-30, 2022. Its most notable resident was Blessed Solanus Casey for some ten years. We were able to view his room, #234, and to pray where he prayed – a unique opportunity. Also of some note, Fr Benedict Groeschel, OFM Cap, spent his novitiate here.



Things got underway Wednesday evening with prayer and Mass, concluding with Night Prayer. Fr Joe Tuscan, OFM Cap, spiritual guardian of the CFP, gave the introductory talk in lieu of a homily. His topic was “Recovery from the Spiritual Pandemic,” a theme he continued during the Retreat time.

Thursday, the Conference Day, began with the Office of Readings and Morning Prayer. Mass followed with an excellent homily that set the tone for the day’s discussion. (Unfortunately, not recorded.) The first day was a Conference on the theme “Authentic Franciscan Spirituality for the Laity.” Opportunity was afforded to allow each of the three groups to learn more about each other. Pepe Ventosa, TOF led off the speakers for the day on the topic “My Soul Yearns for you, My God: *Spiritual Insights on the Third Order of St. Francis.*” The CFP presentation was entitled “Go and Rebuild my Church,” while the Tau-Maria presentation addressed

“The Blessings of a Rule of Life.” Time was afforded for each community to meet separately after each talk to reflect and discuss implications for their own community. The Retreat itself began after Night Prayer Thursday with an all-night Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

The following two days were the Retreat itself. The Retreat featured praying all the Hours except Compline, a daily Mass, another night of Adoration, and 18 hours of silence, what the CFP call “Hermitage Time.”. Thus, all our time at the St Felix Center was ordered around the Liturgy of the Hours cycle. (The CFP uses the full four-volume form of the Liturgy of the Hours – a learning experience itself for those of us used to the shorter form of the Divine Office.) Mid-Afternoon prayer included the Divine Mercy Chaplet. A daily Rosary was also prayed after one of the prayer times, depending upon the day’s schedule.



The Retreat concluded with a Vigil Mass and homily by Fr Vit. He spoke on “Interior Monasticism.” After a final discussion with reflection upon “What has this retreat meant for me? How can I bring back home what the Lord has taught me through this time?” and Night Prayer, the Retreat ended. Our group left after a final Mass by Fr Vit early Sunday morning, but many from the CFP and Tau-Maria had even earlier flights to catch.

Note: There were seven talks altogether between the Conference and the Retreat, which are now available on our YouTube channel – Franciscan Tertiaries Province of the IC. (Links to each talk can also be found in your November Mat Posts). There were also three excellent homilies, two by our own Fr. Vit, but these unfortunately were not recorded.

Our Lady of America Fraternity News – by Margaret Sartor, TOF

No news from Our Lady of America Fraternity in Ashtabula, but best wishes for everyone for a blessed Christmas season and Winter!



St. Padre Pio Fraternity News – by Pat Cuttica, TOF

No news from St. Padre Pio Fraternity in Youngstown, but best wishes for everyone for a blessed Christmas season and Winter!



SS. Francis & Clare Fraternity News – by Roberto Meza, TOF

TWO NEWLY PROFESSED MEMBERS OF THE SS. FRANCIS & CLARE FRATERNITY

On November 12, at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted in Youngstown, Ohio, we joyfully met with our sisters and brothers from the St. Padre Pio Fraternity of Youngstown and the Our Lady of America fraternity of Ashtabula for our annual Day of Recollection.



We started out the day with Mass of Holy Profession offered by Fr. Vit, and Fr. Jeremy Merzweiler of St. Francis de Sales Parish in Coventry, who witnessed the blessed profession of Jesse Kuhn, his parishioner, and Denise Williams of St. Augustine Parish in Barberton. A large attendance of members from our three fraternities, family, and friends participated in the beautiful Mass and Profession. Our fraternity rejoices in welcoming our sister Denise and brother Jesse into our fraternity family!



The topic of the Day of Recollection was, “Answering Your Questions on Spiritual Life”, that Fr. Vit comprehensively answered.

Jesse Kuhn, TOF and Denise Williams, TOF →

We very much appreciated the beautiful hospitality offered by our brothers and sisters of the St. Padre Pio fraternity, and the opportunity for a family reunion with them and the Our Lady of America fraternity. Thank you to all who welcomed us, and to Fr. Vit, Fr. Dennis, and Fr. Jeremy for their encouragement and spiritual guidance!

*Live in such a way that
those who know you
but don't know God
will come to know God
because they know you.*

2022 Year in Review – by Pepe Ventosa, TOF

- We celebrated the 3rd year anniversary of the Community of Franciscan Tertiaries of the OFM Province of the Immaculate Conception on December 8, 2022.
- Our first Annual Pilgrimage took place in May 2022. This pilgrimage was organized by the SS. Francis and Clare Fraternity and attended by all the local fraternities. We visited the “Servants of Mary Center for Peace” in Windsor, OH, home of the world’s largest statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe.
- July 2022 “Mat Posts” was launched. These first Friday email posts are a great source for ongoing formation in Franciscan spirituality, assisting in bringing to fruition the object of the Order, that is, “to form its members in Christian perfection” (Sacra Propediem n.16). These are also posted on our website.
- During the summer months our fraternities had their annual picnic and participated at the pro-life booth of their local annual county fairs.
- The Transitus was celebrated at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted and at St. Nicholas Byzantine Church on October 3, 2022.
- During the month of October 2022, members from our 3 local fraternities joined members of the TAU Franciscan community at the Annual Retreat of the Confraternity of Penitents. It was a wonderful opportunity to pray and grow in the Franciscan way of life along with fellow Franciscans.
- In the month of November 2022, we celebrated together the Holy Profession of Denise Williams, TOF and Jesse Kuhn, TOF into the Third Order of St. Francis. This took place at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted. This was followed by our annual Day of Recollection.
- Throughout the year, local fraternities were involved in multiple ministries, including:
 - Providing care for the spiritual and material needs of the Friars and the Shrine
 - Donation of food items to local parishes’ food bank
 - Praying for the unborn and their mothers at abortion centers
 - Providing Bibles for the incarcerated
 - Spiritual and financial support of seminarians in the Moshi Diocese in Tanzania
 - Spiritual support of local seminarians
 - Providing food for the homeless
 - Praying for the spiritual needs of our Bishops, Diocesan priests/seminarians and the Friars of the Province of the Immaculate Conception
 - Eucharistic Adoration

2023 Looking at the Year Ahead – by Pepe Ventosa, TOF

- In the Spring those involved in Initial/Ongoing Formation will meet to discuss and share resources for formation.
- Our 2nd annual pilgrimage will take place May 20, 2023, sponsored by the St. Padre Pio Fraternity. More information to follow.
- Mark your calendar for October as we have been invited to participate again in the annual retreat of the Confraternity of Penitents. This will take place on Oct 11-15, 2023, at the St. Felix Catholic Center in Indiana.
- Our annual Day of Recollection will take place on November 11, 2023.
- As in prior years, we will continue to build on our foundation with a focus on:
 - The Eucharist: by fostering love and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, the center and inspiration of our Franciscan way of life;
 - Prayer: fostering a spirit of prayer among our brothers and sisters, with the goal of *constant remembrance of God*;
 - Formation: continue to develop a solid program of Initial and Ongoing Formation in the Franciscan way of life;
 - Ministry: inspired by prayer, a response to our “call to rebuild the Church”;
 - Continue to promote the Third Order of St. Francis, with the vision of Pope Benedict XV, “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.” (Sacra Propediem, 14)

Franciscan Tertiaries of the OFM Province of the Immaculate Conception Annual Membership Report

		December 2020	December 2021	December 2022	1 year Change
Members in Fraternity	Professed	51	66	73	
	Novices	14	3	1	
	Total in fraternity	65	69	74	+5 (7%↑)
Members as Isolated Tertiaries	Professed	1	9	11	
	Novices	0	0	5	
	Total Isolated T.	1	9	16	+7 (78%↑)
Total Community Membership		66	78	90	+12 (15%↑)

Postulants/ Inquirers	In Fraternity	0	5	11	
	Isolated Tertiary	0	9	0	
Total		0	14	11	- 3 (21%↓)

Praying for the Souls in Purgatory – by Pepe Ventosa, TOF

Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM, our Spiritual Director, is asking our Community of Tertiaries to pray for the poor souls in purgatory on a regular basis. For this he is recommending a book called “A Month with Our Friends the Souls in Purgatory” as a guide. This book, written by Fr. Martin Berlioux, was published in 1880 and contains a 30-day novena prayer for those in purgatory. Each day of the novena starts with a set of preliminary prayers (Prayer to the Holy Spirit, De Profundis and Prayer for the Souls in Purgatory), followed by a reflection written by Fr. Berlioux, and ending with a concluding prayer. Fr. Vit will provide a few books to the minister of each local fraternity to distribute among the members to pray for these souls on a continual basis. For the Isolated Tertiaries, the book is available online.

In his introduction to the book, Fr. Berlioux writes, “The objective of this short work is to relieve the dead and to be of use to the living. It is a well-known fact in the Christian world that the prayers of the living are beneficial to the dead. However, we are not sufficiently aware of how beneficial for the living are the suffrages (their prayers for our benefit) of the dead”.

Fr. Vit asks, as we pray for the souls in purgatory, to ask for their intercession for holy vocations to the OFM Province of the Immaculate Conception as well as for our community of Tertiaries.

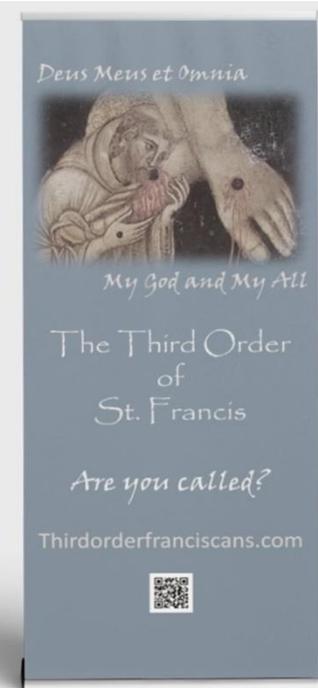
Isolated Tertiaries Update – by Pepe Ventosa, TOF

Isolated Tertiaries (ITs) are members of our community of Franciscan Tertiaries who are not members of a local fraternity. This is due to lack of proximity to a community.

In 2022 we had five inquirers who entered the Novitiate. They are preparing to complete their formation and profess as Third Order Franciscans in 2023. They live in Texas, Florida and Australia and have been attending formation class via Zoom under the guidance and instruction of Ericka Witover, TOF, from Texas as the Master of Formation, assisted by Virgil Daniel, TOF and Debbie Ventosa, TOF, from the Ss. Francis and Clare Fraternity in Ohio. Father Vit Fiala, OFM, attends the monthly Zoom formation with his spiritual direction and teaching and we are grateful for the Friars of the Immaculate Conception Province continued support.

The Professed Isolated Tertiaries have increased in number and currently the community consists of 16 members.

Due to more individual inquiries into this way of life, a second formation team has been formed to meet the growing needs of the IT community. Julie Elkinton, TOF, from the St. Padre Pio Fraternity and Sandy Baden, TOF, Isolated Tertiary from California, will be working under the direction of Ericka in the initial formation of these new inquirers. Sessions are to start in January 2023 with inquirers from Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina and Missouri. We thank God for those who have been prompted by the Holy Spirit to discern following in the footsteps of our Seraphic Father Francis.



Promoting the Third Order of St. Francis

Are there any upcoming events at your parish?
Are you planning on attending a Catholic conference? Are you hosting a "Come and See"?

If so, there is a TOF banner available for you to display in order to promote our Order. We have pamphlets as well. Please contact Pepe if you have any questions.

Pictured here are Virgil and Louise Daniel, TOF, at their parish summer picnic passing out pamphlets and other items on the Third Order with the banner at their side.



Day of Recollection and Holy Profession



Our annual Day of Recollection and Holy Profession took place Saturday, November 12, 2022 at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted in Youngstown. We joyfully met with our brothers and sisters from the St. Padre Pio Fraternity of Youngstown and the Our Lady of America Fraternity of Ashtabula. The topic this year was, "Answering Your Questions on Spiritual Life". Fr. Vit answered our previously submitted questions on spiritual life.



↑ **Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM** **Jesse Kuhn receives the cincture** →



We started out the day with the Mass of Holy Profession at 9 AM, offered by Fr. Vit and Fr. Jeremy Merzweiller of St. Francis de Sales Parish in Coventry, who witnessed the joyful Profession of Jesse Kuhn, his parishioner, and Denise Williams of St. Augustine Parish in Barberton. Pat Cuttica, TOF, Minister of St. Padre Pio Fraternity, welcomed us warmly ahead of Mass.

← **Denise Williams receives the cincture**

Mass and the Profession were beautiful, with a large attendance of members from our three

fraternities, family, and friends. We are so happy to be able to call our dear Jesse and Denise brother and sister, and to welcome them into our fraternity family!

After Mass, we enjoyed a light snack in the church basement and caught up with one another. Paul Fedele, TOF, Minister of Our Lady of America Fraternity, related the news of his wife's miraculous healing from a serious health issue after a novena to St. Therese of Lisieux and Rhoda Wise, and we were all so thankful for this grace.

It was so nice to see Fr. Dennis Arambasick, OFM again!!! Welcome home, Father! ☺

Joanne Angeletti, TOF and Virgil Daniel, TOF offered copies of their newly released book on the iconography of their parish and our fraternity home, St. Nicholas Byzantine Church. The book is beautifully photographed and written, and is very interesting, with spiritual reflections. If you are interested in a copy, which costs \$20, please contact Joanne or Virgil.

2022 Profession →

After we wound up this brief snack and social time, Pepe Ventosa, TOF gave us a short biography of Fr. Vit. For those who were not familiar with his remarkable story, Father was raised in Communist Czechoslovakia, with little contact with religion, since spirituality of any kind is oppressed by Communist leadership. He is blessed with considerable musical talent and entered a prestigious music academy as a pre-teen to study cello, piano, and other instruments, and musical theory. He eventually became a music instructor and a member of the Czechoslovakia National Symphony. While on an international tour in Toronto, Father went out for a walk on a snowy day and stopped in a doorway to warm up. It turned out to be the Franciscan motherhouse. A Brother opened the door, invited him in to get warm and have a snack, and talked about Catholicism for a couple of hours. Father started attending Sunday Mass, then Daily Mass, then entered the Franciscan seminary – and the rest is history! We are blessed to be under his spiritual guidance.



1. Our morning session was on “The Spiritual Life with an Emphasis on our Franciscan Vocation.” Father led us in the Our Father to begin.
 - a. Father discussed interior exile per St. John Climacus.
 - b. This involves detachment from worldly distractions in order to grow closer to God.
 - c. Decide you will serve God.
 - d. Renounce what separates you from God.
 - e. Do not let worldly distractions master you or become the source of your joy.
 - f. Trust Jesus!
2. What can Isolated Tertiaries do to grow in their spiritual life and live their vocation when they aren't part of a fraternity?
 - a. It is like being a hermit.
 - b. Keep in touch via Zoom meetings.
 - c. Place yourself under the spiritual direction of a good priest.
 - d. Stay in communication with the TOF family.
 - e. Remember that mortal sin means to make a pact with the devil. Attend Adoration and Confession often.
3. For a successful and holy religious life:
 - a. Be close to God.
 - b. Do not fear demons – they should fear you!
4. What is meant by “kingdom” (i.e., the Kingdom of God)?
 - a. Anywhere God is the leader, and where his followers dwell, is His Kingdom. We should embrace the Kingdom and become part of it.

At 11 PM, Fr. Dennis and Fr. Vit offered Adoration and Confession in the church. Fr. Dennis led Benediction at the end.

At Noon, we ate a delicious lunch catered by a local Youngstown charity which employs young people in need of work. The St. Padre Pio fraternity ensured we mixed among our fraternities by placing us with members of other fraternities at the tables, which was a great idea! Lots of good conversation along with a good meal for everyone present!

After we wrapped up our meal, Kenny Green, TOF, Debbie Ventosa, TOF, and Bill Marshall, TOF led us in Liturgy of the Hours. This was followed by prayers and remembrance of our beloved dead, including those who entered eternal life during the pandemic. Richard Russelo, TOF, Betty Smith, OFS, and Mary Wagner, OFS were remembered by our fraternity – all of them dear to us and missed for their Franciscan example of faithfulness.

The afternoon session opened with Fr. Vit exploring the following:

1. How can we know Jesus as St. Francis did?
 - a. Through Lectio Divina.
 - b. Meditation. What does Jesus say to me? Put yourself in the picture.
 - c. Study commentaries on Scripture from trusted, faithful sources.
 - d. Prayer, whether it is for intercession or deliverance. Make it part of your life.
 - e. Contemplate. See your world as God sees it – and respond as He does.

With Fr. Vit's blessing, we concluded our Day of Recollection. We look forward to being together again next year!

The sessions taught by Fr. Vit are available on our YouTube channel: Franciscan Tertiaries Province of the IC

Save the Dates!

2/22/23	Ash Wednesday
4/9/23	Easter Sunday
5/20/23	Annual TOF Community Pilgrimage (St. Padre Pio Fraternity will arrange – Details TBA!)

7 SIMPLE LESSONS FROM ST. JOHN PAUL II

As the leader of the Catholic Church for 27 years, Pope John Paul II taught the faithful many lessons. Some of these lessons stood out more than others.

- 1. If He asks much of you, it is because He knows you can give much.**
- 2. Do not be afraid to take a chance on peace.**
- 3. Do not be satisfied with mediocrity.**
- 4. Do not abandon yourself to despair.**
- 5. As the family goes, so goes the whole world.**
- 6. If there is no love, everything becomes meaningless.**
- 7. It's better to cry than be angry.**

