

Spring, 2023

Volume 4, Issue 1

The Troubadour

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



Keeping the Faith

Saint Fidelis of Sigmaringen's Story (from Franciscan Media)

If a poor man needed some clothing, Fidelis would often give the man the clothes right off his back. Complete generosity to others characterized this saint's life.

Born in 1577, Mark Rey became a lawyer who constantly upheld the causes of the poor and oppressed people. Nicknamed "the poor man's lawyer," Rey soon grew disgusted with the corruption and injustice he saw among his colleagues. He left his law career to become a priest, joining his brother George as a member of the Capuchin Order. Fidelis was his religious name. His wealth was divided between needy seminarians and the poor.

As a follower of Saint Francis of Assisi, Fidelis continued his devotion to the weak and needy. During a severe epidemic in a city where he was guardian of a friary, Fidelis cared for and cured many sick soldiers.

He was appointed head of a group of Capuchins sent to preach against the Calvinists and Zwinglians in Switzerland. Almost certain violence threatened. Those who observed the mission felt that success was more attributable to the prayer of Fidelis during the night than to his sermons and instructions.

He was accused of opposing the peasants' national aspirations for independence from Austria. While he was preaching at Seewis, to which he had gone against the advice of his friends, a gun was fired at him, but he escaped unharmed. A Protestant offered to shelter Fidelis, but he declined, saying his life was in God's hands. On the road back, he was set upon by a group of armed men and killed.

Fidelis was canonized in 1746. Fifteen years later he was recognized as a martyr.

Spiritual Director

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



Editor

Susan Kramer, TOF

Franciscan Quote for Spring, 2023

"Woe to me if I should prove myself but a half-hearted soldier in the service of my thorn-crowned Captain."

**St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen, OFM Cap. (1577-1622) - Feast Day - April 24
Defender of the Faith, Martyr**



St. Clare of Assisi – by Franciscan Media

(July 16, 1194 – August 11, 1253) – Feast Day – August 11

One of the more sugary movies made about Francis of Assisi pictures Clare as a golden-haired beauty floating through sun-drenched fields, a sort of one-woman counterpart to the new Franciscan Order.

The beginning of her religious life was indeed movie material. Having refused to marry at 15, Clare was moved by the dynamic preaching of Francis. He became her lifelong friend and spiritual guide.

At 18, Clare escaped from her father's home one night, was met on the road by friars carrying torches, and in the poor little chapel called the Portiuncula received a rough woolen habit, exchanged her jeweled belt for a common rope with knots in it, and sacrificed her long tresses to Francis' scissors. He placed her in a Benedictine convent, which her father and uncles immediately stormed in rage. Clare clung to the altar of the church, threw aside her veil to show her cropped hair, and remained adamant.



Sixteen days later her sister Agnes joined her. Others came. They lived a simple life of great poverty, austerity, and complete seclusion from the world, according to a Rule which Francis gave them as a Second Order. At age 21, Francis obliged Clare under obedience to accept the office of abbess, one she exercised until her death.

The Poor Ladies went barefoot, slept on the ground, ate no meat, and observed almost complete silence. Later Clare, like Francis, persuaded her sisters to moderate this rigor: "Our bodies are not made of brass." The greatest emphasis, of course, was on gospel poverty. They possessed no property, even in common, subsisting on daily contributions. When even the pope tried to persuade Clare to mitigate this practice, she showed her characteristic firmness: "I need to be absolved from my sins, but I do not wish to be absolved from the obligation of following Jesus Christ."

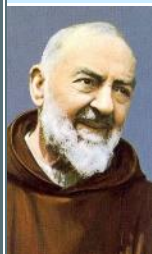
Contemporary accounts glow with admiration of Clare's life in the convent of San Damiano in Assisi. She served the sick and washed the feet of the begging nuns. She came from prayer, it was said, with her face so shining it dazzled those about her. She suffered serious illness for the last 27 years of her life. Her influence was such that popes, cardinals, and bishops often came to consult her—Clare herself never left the walls of San Damiano.

Francis always remained her great friend and inspiration. Clare was always obedient to his will and to the great ideal of gospel life which he was making real.

A well-known story concerns her prayer and trust. Clare had the Blessed Sacrament placed on the walls of the convent when it faced attack by invading Saracens. "Does it please you, O God, to deliver into the hands of these beasts the defenseless children I have nourished with your love? I beseech you, dear Lord, protect these whom I am now unable to protect." To her sisters she said, "Don't be afraid. Trust in Jesus." The Saracens fled.

St. Clare is the patron saint of those who suffer from eye disorders, and of television (*how appropriate that Mother Angelica, the founder of EWTN Radio and Television, was herself a Poor Clare!*)

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



Life takes many twists and turns, and the visions of youth can never foresee the joys, the trials, and the surprises that continue to occur in life. My husband and I have been blessed to be members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem since 2010. Our nomination and subsequent acceptance into the Order was certainly unforeseen by us even a few years earlier and yet it has had a profound influence on our lives.

So, what is the EOHSJ? It is the only lay institution of the Holy See with the task of providing for the needs of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem (which cares for the Church in Israel, Palestine, Jordan, and Cyprus) and the support of the Christian presence in the Holy Land. Its origins date back to the First Crusade when its leader, Godfrey de Bouillon, liberated Jerusalem. Soon after the First Crusade, the troops, including the Knights of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, began to return to their homelands leading to the establishment of priories all over Europe. The Order eventually failed as a cohesive military unit but the priories kept alive the ideals of the Crusader Knights: propagation of the Faith, defense of the weak, charity toward other human beings. The Order of today continues to adhere to these ideals as it continues its support of Holy Land Christians, a group of people often not considered in all the political and military upheavals in the Middle East.



In recent years, there has been an exodus of Christian families from the Holy Land so that the number of Christians remaining has decreased to only 2-4% of the population. It is these forgotten Christians that the Order helps support by funding local schools and institutions of higher learning in the region, hospitals, and seminaries.

A few years ago, my husband and I were privileged to go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land and witnessed firsthand the plight of the Christians and the wonderful sight of the Franciscan presence there. Yes, the Franciscans are in the Holy Land! For centuries, Franciscan friars and brothers have been responsible for the preservation and upkeep of the places where Jesus lived, preached, died, and was buried. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, from which the Order derives its name, includes the site of Christ's crucifixion and tomb.

It will soon be Lent. Every year, on Good Friday, the Catholic Church takes up a special collection for the support of the Holy Places in the Holy Land. This is the only time in the year that we are asked to do this. This year, let us remember, and perhaps ask others to remember, and contribute to help our Franciscan family maintain our Christian presence in the Holy Land, the birthplace of Our Lord and the place where He lived and died for us.

The Jerusalem Cross, pictured at the right, is used by Franciscans in the Holy Land, who have been custodians of Christian holy sites throughout the Holy Land for centuries. The dominant center cross represents our Catholic Faith. The surrounding smaller crosses represent St. Francis's goal of bringing Catholicism to the four corners of the earth – North, South, East, and West.



Our Lady of America Fraternity News – by Julianne Pertz, TOF



On December 14, 2022, Aaron Anthony Fedele was accepted as a novice into the fraternity of Our Lady Of America. Our spiritual director, Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM, presided over the service, and Aaron was supported by his father, Paul, our minister prefect. Margaret Sartor, formation director, has been working with Aaron since 2020. Aaron is married to Katherine and they have three children. His grandmother,



Cordy Fedele, is also a member of our fraternity, so this is our third generation of Fedeles! **(Pictured from left – Paul Fedele, TOF, Aaron Fedele, Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM, and Margaret Sartor, TOF)**

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

The annual baby shower for the Embrace Care Center in Barberton, Ohio was held at our January gathering, where material as well as monetary goods were donated. The Embrace clinic provides the community with mentoring opportunities for young fathers and classes for both parents. The clinic is Christian and operates fully within Catholic doctrine on life. The annual baby shower is a blessing for us as the representative shares positive outcomes for those they serve.



We are currently blessed to have three Inquirers into the Third Order way of Life. They are looking into continuing in the Postulancy phase in April as they continue to explore and discern this way of life. Kindly remember Carolyn, Marlene, and Dennis in your prayers.

Update on the bylaws: We hope to finish in the next quarter. The Initial Formation Curriculum is taking shape and we hope that in the next quarter that will be completed as well by the grace of God.

Isolated Tertiaries Update – by Pepe Ventosa, TOF

Our community of Isolated Tertiaries continues to gather once a month via zoom on the first Thursday of the month. We are blessed to have spiritual direction at these gatherings from Fr. Vit, OFM.

Currently we have two Initial Formation sessions under the leadership of Ericka Witover, TOF, Formation Director for the Isolated Tertiaries.

We have a group of four novices who are getting ready for Holy Profession, if so discerned, within the next 2-3 months. This group is being taught by Ericka Witover, TOF, (Isolated Tertiary-Texas), Virgil Daniel, TOF and Debbie Ventosa, TOF (both from the SS. Francis and Clare Fraternity). Novices are George (Florida), Wanda (Texas), Frank (Australia) and Gordon (Australia). Please keep them in your prayers as they discern their call to the Third Order of St. Francis.

In January 2023 a new group of four Inquirers started Initial Formation. This group is being taught by Sandy Baden, TOF (Isolated Tertiary - California) and Julie Elkinton, TOF (St. Padre Pio Fraternity).

Inquirers are Stephany (Missouri), Bryan (Georgia), James (Virginia) and Bob (North Carolina). Please keep these Inquirers also in your prayers as they discern entering the Novitiate in the next few months.

The Rule of 1883 by Pope Leo the XIII has been a welcome and enlightening pathway for growth in Christian perfection and this group is eager to learn and grow in the Franciscan charism.

St. Francis of Assisi, Pray for Us!

St. Padre Pio Fraternity Has Planned the May Pilgrimage – by Pat Cuttica, TOF



We will be having a tour and history of St. Columba Cathedral in Youngstown, followed by lunch. Afterwards, we will go to the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted for a talk by Fr. Vit on the history of the shrine.

Here's the timeline:

10:00 AM – Tour of St. Columba Cathedral
 11:00 AM – Adoration and Benediction at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted
 12:00 PM – Mass
 12:30 PM (or so) – Catered Lunch at the Shrine Hall (*cost to be determined*)
 1:30 PM – Talk by Fr. Vit on the History of the Shrine, followed by the Iron Curtain Stations of the Cross outdoors (*optional*)

We hope everyone can join us for a family reunion of our fraternities, and to visit our most treasured spiritual homes here in Youngstown!

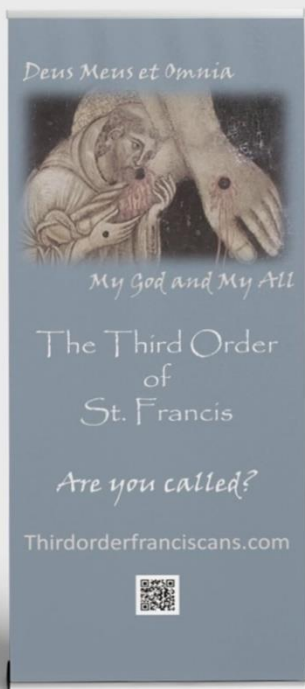
TOF Outreach – by Pepe Ventosa, TOF



On February 25, 2023, Matt Poletti, TOF, and Pepe Ventosa, TOF, both from the SS. Francis and Clare Fraternity in Barberton, Ohio attended the annual Catholic Men's Conference in Columbus, Ohio. The conference's theme this year was "Called to Be Saints" and 2,000+ men attended. This year the conference was dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Holy Family. Matt and Pepe manned a display table with information about the Third Order of St. Francis. Brochures on the TOF were distributed to those visiting the TOF table. Visitors to the table were also joyfully greeted by Jess, Matt's wife, and their daughter Caroline.

(Pictured at the right – Pepe Ventosa, TOF with our beautiful new TOF banner)

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.



Save the Dates!

4/9/23	Easter Sunday
5/20/23	Annual TOF Community Pilgrimage (St. Padre Pio Fraternity hosting – St. Columba Cathedral & Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted in Youngstown)
10/11 – 10/15	Confraternity of Penitents Retreat (St. Felix Retreat Ctr., Huntington Indiana)

"THE WICKED FEAR THE GOOD, BECAUSE THE GOOD ARE A CONSTANT REPROACH TO THEIR CONSCIENCES. THE UNGODLY LIKE RELIGION IN THE SAME WAY THAT THEY LIKE LIONS, EITHER DEAD OR BEHIND BARS. THEY FEAR RELIGION WHEN IT BREAKS LOOSE AND BEGINS TO CHALLENGE THEIR CONSCIENCES."

**ARCHBISHOP
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