



Soldiers of Christ

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

May 2023

Sandy Baden, TOF, Editor

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TERTIARY CLUSTERS

With this addition of the Soldiers of Christ Newsletter, I am excited to introduce the concept of “Clusters” to the Isolated Community of Franciscan Tertiaries. After discussion with Fr. Vit, we believe this to be a great tool, especially for the Isolated Tertiaries, to grow in love of God and neighbor (Christian Perfection) by following the Franciscan way of life.

As Isolated Tertiaries are not members of a fraternity, it is recommended that all Isolated Tertiaries, unless prevented by a reasonable reason, be part of a Cluster. The meetings of a Cluster have a specific basic format that is to be followed. Please review the handout at the end of this newsletter about the Clusters for further information. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

I need to keep a list of Clusters and its members, so please provide me with this information after your Cluster is formed.

Pax et bonum,
Pepe Ventosa, TOF
Assistant for Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM
with the Isolated Tertiary Community

ST. PASCAL BAYON, FEAST DAY MAY 17TH

FRANCISCAN FAMILY FOCUS: Submitted by Ericka Witover, OFM

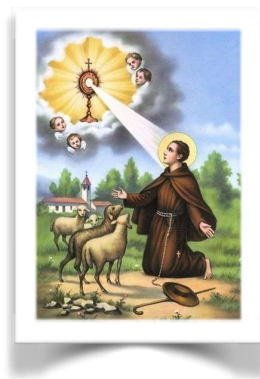
Pascal was born May 16, 1541 in the Kingdom of Aragon. From age seven to twenty-four he led the life of a shepherd and didn't know how to read. Someone gave him the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary so he asked for help to read it, falling in love with Our Lady. He tried to relieve the poor at the time, giving up a portion of his dinner that he was sent into the fields with. He was very honest, never used the foul language of his companions, and was observed to have religious inclinations. In 1564 he joined the Reformed Franciscans as a lay brother, stating he felt it was not the path for him to strive for the Priesthood.

He never had more than one habit that was thread bare, and walked barefoot in the snow. He was a cook, a gardener, the assigned beggar for alms, and eventually the porter-serving the poor with great humility, unfailing courtesy and generosity.

He lived his life in contemplation and silent meditation, often as he worked. He was a contemplative and had frequent ecstatic visions. He would spend the night before the altar in silence some nights. On one occasion, in the course of a journey through France, he defended the dogma of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist against a Calvinist preacher, and in consequence, narrowly escaped death at the hands of a Huguenot mob.

He died on May 17, 1592 after falling ill. His tomb in Villareal, Spain became an immediate place of pilgrimage and there were soon miracles that were reported at his tomb. Pope Paul V beatified him on October 29, 1618, and Pope Alexander XIII, canonized him on October 16, 1690. Pope Leo XIII, in the Apostolic Brief Providentissimus Deus-November 28, 1897 proclaimed the saint as the "Seraph of the Eucharist," as well as the patron of Eucharistic congresses and affiliated associations. Art often depicts him wearing the Franciscan habit and bearing a Monstrance to signify his devotion to the Holy Eucharist.

St. Pascal Bayon Pray for us!



FRANCISCAN CELEBRATIONS!

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our Lord Jesus Christ has abundantly blessed the Third Order Franciscans in the past two years, resulting in four upcoming Professions into the Order! Please keep the following in your prayers, as we celebrate their decision to join our family in the upcoming months and serve our Savior in the Franciscan charism!

Wanda from Texas, date to be announced.

Gordon from Australia, will be Professing on June 18th.

George from Florida will be Professing at the Shrine. Profession date to be announced.

Frank from Australia, date to be announced.

We have also been blessed with four additional people who are currently in the Inquiry phase of Formation. Please keep the following in your prayers for their continued discernment to enter into the Novitiate phase in July.

Stephany from Missouri

Bryan from Georgia

James from Virginia

Bob from North Carolina

We have one additional lady, Sandy from Florida who is waiting to enter the next Inquiry Formation class. Please welcome her when she joins in with us at the monthly IT Fraternal Gathering.

Eternal God and Father, we thank you for all those who heed your call to follow your Son, Jesus Christ, in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi!

Pax et bonum,

Ericka Witover, TOF

IT Formation Master

ONGOING FORMATION ZOOM GATHERING MONTHLY SCHEDULE: 2023
PRESENTATIONS

MONTH	PRESENTATION BY:	TOPIC	ARTICLE
JANUARY	MARY TAG, TOF		ARTICLE 48
FEBRUARY	LINDA MENSER, TOF		ARTICLES 49-52
MARCH	JULIE ELKINTON, TOF		ARTICLE 53
APRIL	Cancelled due to Holy Week		
MAY	VIRGIL DANIEL, TOF		ARTICLES 54 & 55
JUNE			
JULY			
AUGUST			
SEPTEMBER			
OCTOBER			
NOVEMBER			
DECEMBER			

Remember, each Presentation should be 10-15 minutes, and they questions to promote discussion. Discussion from each person should be short, around three minutes so everyone will have a chance to share.

Please contact Linda Menser, TOF if you would like to volunteer for future Presentations.

Articles 54 and 55 to be presented by Virgil Daniel, GOF:

Article 54: The tertiaries, going through the world, shall, with joy and thanksgiving, contemplate God in all creation. Always and everywhere they shall proclaim His glory, acting as heralds of the Great King after the example of their Seraphic Father. In a more excellent way still, they shall glorify God in union with Christ and His Church by active participation in the sacred functions.

Article 55: With all due care they shall keep holy Sundays and the feast days of obligation. They shall be painstaking in their attendance at the functions recommended in the Rule and these Constitutions, and at other sacred functions, especially those carried out in their parochial Franciscan churches.

We need volunteers for future Presentations at our monthly Zoom gathers. Our next article will be 56, June 2, 2023, who would like to volunteer?

Article 56: The Union with Christ which is begun in the faithful by baptism is renewed and strengthened through participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Consequently, tertiaries shall be on fire with love for the most sublime Sacrament of the body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, in obedience to the words of their Seraphic Father. "Brothers, kissing your feet, and with all the charity of which I am capable, I beg you all to show every reverence and honor possible to the most holy Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ in whom all things in heaven and on earth are set at peace and are reconciled (cf. Colossians, 1:20) to Almighty God" Letter to the General Chapter).



“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, GOF
TUESDAY:	Linda Denser, GOF
WEDNESDAY:	Luis Guzman, GOF Judith Inglesby, GOF Paul & Mary Tag, GOF
THURSDAY:	Sandy Baden, GOF
FRIDAY:	Linda Denser, GOF Pepe Ventosa, GOF
SATURDAY:	Ericka Witover, GOF
SUNDAY:	Linda Denser, GOF

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 for all the members of the Isolated Tertiaries Community.

Please contact Pepe Ventosa, GOF if you would like to be added to this Eucharistic Schedule.

**Annual Third Order Franciscan Pilgrimage
Saturday, May 20, 2023**

Take a step back in history and explore the beginnings of St. Philip Neri Parish in Dungannon, Ohio, the oldest continuous Roman Catholic congregation in northern Ohio and those of our beloved Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted in Youngstown.



**St. Philip Neri Parish
Dungannon
11328 Gavers Road
Hanoverton, OH 44423**



**Shrine of Our Lady
Comfort of the Afflicted
517 S. Belle Vista Avenue
Youngstown, OH 44509**

- 9:30AM** Arrival at St. Philip Neri Parish
- 9:45AM** Tour of present day church and original log cabin
- 11:00AM** Depart for Youngstown
- Noon** Mass at Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted
- 1:00PM** Catered hot lunch at shrine
Cost: \$11.00 per person
- 1:45PM** Presentation on the History of the Shrine by Fr. Vit Fiala
- 2:30PM** Departure for home

Suggestion: Wear comfortable walking shoes
Questions?: Call or text Pat at 330-720-1546

ADMONITION XIX
The Humble Servant of God



Blessed the religious (Blessed is the servant) who has no more regard for himself when people praise him and make much of him when they despise and revile him and say that he is ignorant. What a man is before God, that he is and no more. Woe to that religious who, after he has been put in a position of authority by others is not anxious to leave it of his own free will. On the other hand, blessed that religious (=blessed is the servant: Mt. 24-46) who is elected to office against his will, but always wants to be subject to others.

In reading of this Admonition many thoughts come to mind concerning obedience and humility before our fellow man and to God. One statement which stands out, which was mentioned eight times in this commentary of Admonition nineteen, “What a man is before God, that he is and no more.” Only God knows what you are before Him. Our calculations concerning ourselves is mostly seen through our eyes and those of our neighbors, is this not true?

Success seems to be our only aim when we try to accomplish something we are striving to achieve. In this Admonition it stresses the opposite scenario. Even though as a Tertiary our obedience to God and how we see ourselves before Him is something to contemplate. If we are to obtain humility, as this Admonition dictates, we need to humble ourselves before our Lord in prayer and lift the blinders that hide our true nature. How do you see yourself as God would see you?

It is difficult to know how God would see us, but in reality we know God hears us, loves us, and guides us as we carry our cross in our journey through life. Do we want to be praised and exalted for all that we do that seems to be a successful job of accomplishment. Our true nature tends to lead us in that direction, but we must remember it is God who brought us there for His glory. Give God the credit for whatever you do because God gave you that talent as we have discussed in Admonition eighteen.

As Lothar Hardick, OFM implies we should not worry what others think of us and practice humility before our Lord because, “What a man is before God, that he is and no more.” Each time in reading this statement from St. Francis our understanding seems to become more in focus as to how we should not be concerned of how we look to others. This also gives us freedom and joy in the thought of humility towards our goal of perfection as a tertiary.

The world sees us individually in our accomplishments and judges us accordingly to those abilities we have given them. This is a conflict in this Admonition, but everything in our faith would be in conflict with the world we live in today. We have been programmed in the world of chaos and disbelief as we try to practice our Christian values in the Holy Catholic Church.

If God took away all our talents and all our possessions, because they belong to Him, what would we be left with? The gift of our free will? “What a man is before God, that he is and no more.” In stripping us of our talents and possessions, think of who we are before God. In using our talents and possessions, with our free will, we should give back to God what is His by using them for the glory of God.

In summary, Lothar Hardick, OFM gives a clear vision of St. Francis and his recommendations in practicing humility before our Lord. All that we have and our talents are given to us by God. We should, therefore, give back to God what is His and then wait for the words from our Lord: Well done my child, come and enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

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



What is a “Cluster”?

A Cluster is a small group of Tertiaries of the OFM Province of the Immaculate Conception that meets on a regular basis once or twice a month to support each other in living their Franciscan vocation.

What is the purpose of Clusters?

The main purpose of a cluster is to assist its members to grow in “the love of Christ, of the Church, and to the practice of Christian virtues”, the aim of the Third Order according to Pope Leo XIII. The participation in a cluster offers the Franciscan Tertiary a tool for growth in prayer and love of God and neighbor.

What takes place at a meeting of a cluster?

A meeting of a cluster has 3 essential components: prayer, ongoing formation and discussion/sharing, with the following format:

- 1- Opening prayer: Prayer to the Holy Spirit
- 2- Lectio Divina: Gospel of the day
- 3- Ongoing Formation: topics (related to the Franciscan way of life) are chosen by each individual cluster and assigned to different members.
- 4- Discussion/sharing: for example, “What has been most helpful for me, since the last time we met, to grow closer to God?” or, “What has been a stumbling block since the last time we met, in growing closer to God?”
- 5- Closing prayer: Our Father, followed by the Prayer to St. Michael and ending with the prayer of St. Francis in front of the St. Damiano Crucifix

What a cluster is not?

A cluster is not a “prayer group”, or a “Bible or Franciscan study group”, or an “apostolate group” and such. Although these types of groups are meritorious in the life of the Church, the Tertiary Clusters have a specific purpose different from these. To be considered a “Tertiary Cluster”, it is essential that the format of the meeting above is followed.

- Clusters meet once or twice a month for about one hour. Frequency and duration of the meetings is decided by its members.
- Commitment is expected from each participant.
- Confidentiality at a cluster meeting is essential, required and expected.
- It is recommended for each cluster to be named after a Franciscan saint or a title of Our Blessed Mother. This is to be decided by its members.
- Format for the meeting is strictly followed, with all items covered.
- As confidentiality is safeguarded by all members, out of courtesy no guests are permitted unless approved beforehand by all the cluster's members. Only members of the community of Franciscan Tertiaries of the OFM Province of the Immaculate Conception are to be considered as guests. Non-members, without exception, are not permitted as guests.

How can I join a cluster?

As a tool for growth in Franciscan spirituality, it is recommended that all members of the community of Isolated Tertiaries, unless prevented by a reasonable cause, be part of a cluster.

To form a new cluster:

- Get in contact with one or two like-minded Tertiaries and suggest forming a cluster. Discuss a name for the cluster group. Discuss inviting others, keeping the number of participants between three to five.
- Members can be selected as desired. For example, they can be chosen by proximity, by sex, married couples, singles, age, etc. When you form a cluster, specify what is to be required for membership in the cluster.
- Decide on frequency, length and dates of meetings. Ideally should meet twice a month, but once a month is an option.
- Discuss topics for ongoing formation. All are to participate in formation.
- Adding a new member should be a decision made by all the cluster's members. Before bringing a new member, a request for input/vote from the members already in the cluster should take place. If accepted, the person can be invited for membership.
- Commitment and confidentiality are expected from all the cluster members.
- After formation of a cluster, please notify the Spiritual Director's Assistant of the name of the cluster and its members.
- Clusters whose members live in close proximity can meet in person if desired. Others can meet virtually.
- No "offices" (ie, president/secretary, etc) are to be selected within the membership of the cluster.
- Although each member can participate in his/her own apostolic activity, no specific apostolate or ministry is to be undertaken as an activity of the cluster.
- A member of a cluster has the option to transfer to another cluster. This decision should be embraced with Franciscan charity by all members.
- It is permissible for a Tertiary to be a member of more than one cluster if so desired, always keeping in mind the confidentiality that is expected within each cluster.

To join a cluster already formed:

- Contact a member of a cluster to request acceptance to his/her cluster.
- The member will present your request to the cluster at their next meeting and a vote will be made. Franciscan charity, along with the necessities of the cluster to function properly should be taken into consideration when discerning acceptance of a new member.
- You will be notified of the member's decision and can proceed accordingly.
- If you can't find a cluster to join, you can start a new one or can contact the Spiritual Director's Assistant for recommendations.

Upcoming Events

MAY 4: IT Zoom Gathering, 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 4:00 PM Pacific Time. You can sign in 15 minutes earlier before the meeting begins. Presentation: Article 54-55.

May 11: IT Inquiry Formation Group 2, 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 4:00 PM Pacific Time. You can sign in 15 minutes earlier before the meeting begins.

May 14: Mother's Day

May 18: The Ascension of the Lord

May 20: Annual Third Order Franciscan Pilgrimage..(See Flyer, page 5).

May 28: Pentecost Sunday

May 31: Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
