



# Soldiers of Christ

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

October 2023

Sandy Baden, TOF, Editor

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## “He is the Suffering Servant for the T.O.F. Poem written by Eric Witover

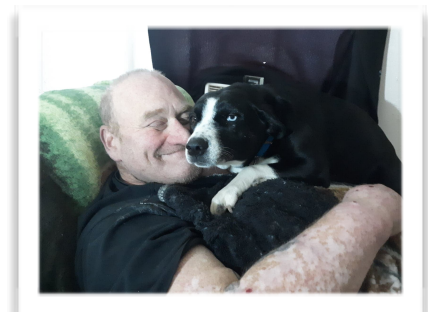
Today I walk hand in hand with  
my Franciscan Army band.  
Together we stand for Christ our  
Lord, ever moving forward, always  
advancing toward.

Our goal isn't riches nor land or  
fees. Our goal is to convey  
Christ's message to the four  
seas. To proclaim His word not  
through speech alone, but to  
walk as Christ did and lead people  
home.

To help the animals and to contain  
man's fear, and to teach brethren to  
hold Christ dear. With the Tau in one  
hand and the Word in the other, we  
go out and serve both animals and  
and our brother.

We travel so we start walking  
all the way there. With our  
brothers and sisters who  
follow St. Clare.

Yes, the Franciscans are  
here to help show the way,  
because Christ our Lord  
will take us home one  
day.



Eric and Blue  
(Blue is for Blue Eye) 1

ST. ELZEAR OF SABRAN, TOF  
Submitted by Ericka Witover, TOF



Elzear was born in 1285 in the castle St. Jean-de-Robians near Carriers d'argues in Provence, Southern France. When he was ten years old he was betrothed to twelve year old Delphine of Glandeves, the daughter and heiress of the Count of Puy-Michel, whom he had grown up with. Three years later they were married, but upon their wedding night Delphine informed Elzear that she had taken a private vow of Chastity. Afterwards they entered the Third Order Franciscans of whom Delphine is a Blessed herself.

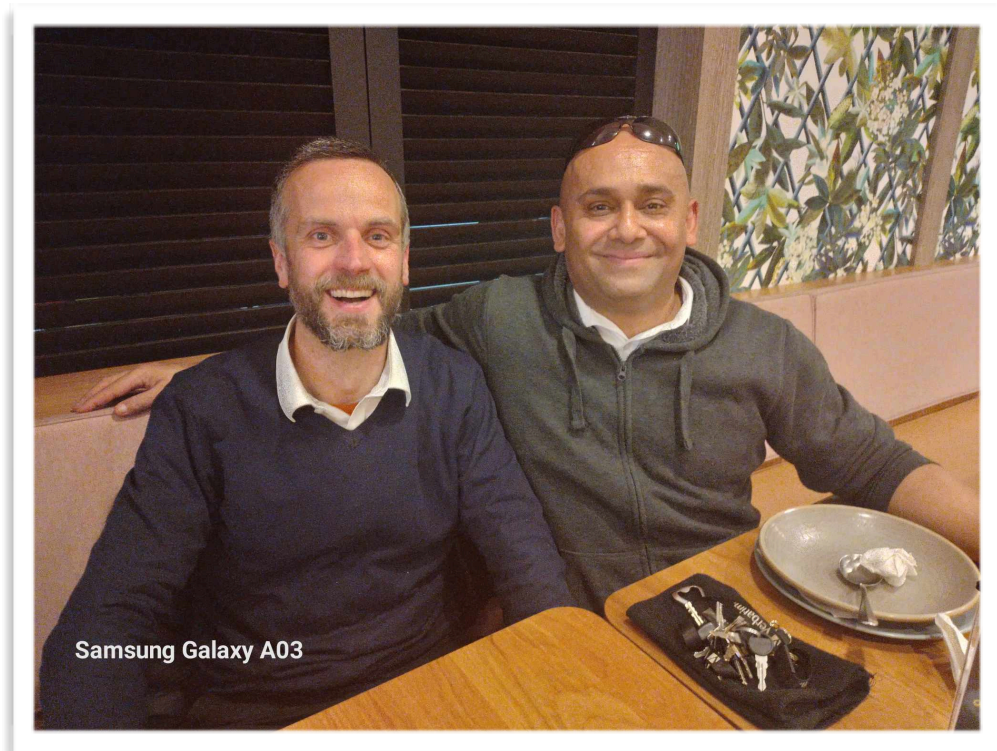
They vied with one another in their practice of prayer, severe penances of the flesh, and charity to the poor. Every day twelve of the poor would dine at their table. When Elzear was twenty they moved to a place of greater solitude in order to grow in virtue. He was always gentle, modest and friendly to everyone and always made sure that the laws of God were adhered to in his dominions. God also granted him the gift of miracles, healing several lepers. When his father died in 1309 he became Count of Ariano in Italy. In 1312 Elzear marched at the head of the army of King Robert of Naples to help expel Emperor Henry VII from the City. After the Emperor's death he returned home to Delphine to live once again a life of piety. In 1317 he was called to Naples to help arrange the marriage of Marie of Valois to Duke Charles, which he succeeded at. However very shortly thereafter he died and was buried in the Franciscan habit in the church of the Friars Minor at Apt, Vacluse. Sadly his tomb was destroyed during the French Revolution.

The decree for his canonization was signed by his Godson, Pope Urban V and counted by his successor, Pope Gregory XI about 1371. His wife the Countess Delphine was also Beautified by Pope Urban at that time. They shared the same Feast Day celebrated by the Franciscan Third Order on September 26th.

## A NEW CLUSTER FORMATION IN AUSTRALIA

Frank and Gordon met for the the first time in person and had dinner somewhere in Australia half way between Canberra, the capital of Australia, and Oberon where Gordon lives, up the blue mountain of New South Wales.

Both have recently been Professed. Frank was Professed July 16, 2023 and Gordon was Professed June 18, 2023 as TOF Isolated Tertiaries. Both are from Australia.



Frank, TOF and Gordon, TOF

They talked about their Cluster with the two of them in Australia and have called it “Our Lady of the Southern Cross,” named after a cross in the night sky of the Southern celestial hemisphere.

## OUR STORY

Submitted by Gordon Smith, TOF

“Good day Mate” is the common hello here in Australia, the land down under.

On the Feast Day of St. Mathew the Apostle, the two members of the TOF Isolated Tertiaries, here in Australia, meet on Zoom to form our Cluster. We came up with our Patron Saint and named our Cluster after Our Lady with the title of “Our Lady of the Southern Cross,” Help of Christians.

The title of “Southern Cross” derives from the constellation of stars seen only from the Southern hemisphere. Mary is the Help of Christians, as she leads all people to her Son. She is our help and advocate as we agreed to meet at 7:00 PM. We started with prayer to the Holy Spirit followed by Lectio Divina on the Gospel of the day, which is a reading from the Gospel of St. Mathew. For On Going Formation we have decided to read a chapter or page each time we meet from the handbook of the Third Order Secular of St. Francis of Assisi, by Basil Gummermann, OFM, CAP. The topic of vocation recruitment was also discussed as we try to promote the TOF here in Australia. We have also decided to meet on Zoom for our Cluster on the Third Thursday of the month for an hour. Our next meeting we will share more on questions like, “What has been the most helpful for me since the last time we met to grow closer to God?”

In closing we recited the Our Father, the prayer of St. Michael the Archangel and using Frank’s San Damiano Cross, that is on his background wall, we ended our Cluster meeting with the sign of the cross and wished each other a wonderful week, and may the “Lord’s Will Be Done” in our pilgrimage here on earth.

Painting of Our Lady of the Southern Cross, Help of Christians. Artist: Paul Newton - 2008, taken from The Catholic Weekly, August 2008. Copies of the of Our Lady of the Southern Cross are available from the Catholic Weekly Newspaper, Sydney.



At World Youth Day in Sydney, Australia in 2008, Pope Benedict XVI blessed the painting of Our Lady of the Southern Cross, Help of Christians, which hangs in St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney. Sydney Portrait artist, Paul Newton, had been asked to paint this new image of Our Lady and the Child Jesus to coincide with World Youth Day, 2008. Using Australian icons and motifs, Paul was able to create a uniquely Australian image of Our Lady presenting the baby Jesus to the world. He did this after doing a lot of research on other paintings of the Mother and Child from the history of traditional Western Art.

The landscape was again meant to be symbolic on a number of levels. The water flowing through, in that meandering river, was symbolic of the Holy Spirit as well as in literal ways suggesting the Australian outback with the scattered gum trees and a barren landscape.

A quote from Paul Newton states: "It's a twilight sky so I could show both the landscape and the suggestion of the Southern Cross. The stars in the sky, in addition to the Southern Cross, are as accurate as I could paint them in their correct positions in the Southern Sky."

What does the Southern Cross mean to aboriginal people? The first Australia. Many Aboriginal groups used the Southern Cross to tell time—they would say, 'its tail is facing this way,' or 'wake me when the cross turns over.' By doing this, they could be as accurate as every two hours throughout the night.

Pax et bonum,  
Gordon Stanley Smith, TOF

"Preach the Gospel at all times, and if necessary,  
use words."

St. Francis of Assisi, Pray for us.

## A NEW CLUSTER FORMATION IN TEXAS

On July 27, 2023 Wanda Ortiz and Ericka Witover met for the first time at Ericka's home for a private gathering. We voted to name our Cluster the "St. Anthony Cluster." We also voted to study one or two entries in the Rule of the Third Order Franciscans each gathering. We reviewed and discussed #1 of Chapter II-On the Discipline of Living regarding Modesty. We discussed the seemingly growing lack of respect in dress of Mass attendees. We realized it could be done out of ignorance of whose presence they are in since many do not believe in the real presence anymore, a lack of education, or a lack of integrity in themselves.

We agreed to do penance by offering prayer to Our Lord whenever we witnessed this distressing trend at Mass. Our Cluster lasted one hour and we agreed to meet the last Thursday of every month. Relics of Franciscan Saints were present with us helping us to be involved the the "Communion of Saints."

Pax et bonum,  
Ericka Witover, TOF

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For where two or three are gathered together in my name,  
there am I in the midst of them. Matthew 18:20

# Relative of Patron Saint of Ecuador Invested into Novitiate of the Third Order

Submitted by Debbie Ventosa, TOF



On the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, Stephany Svorinic (Stephanie Susberich) had the ceremony of entrance into the Novitiate. This was held at the Cathedral The Immaculate Conception in Kansas City in a private ceremony.

Stephany was born into a Catholic family, the third child with an older brother and sister. From her earliest memories, devotion to St. Mariana of Jesus of Paredes was nurtured as her mother relayed that she is related to this saint. Growing up she shared that her family inconsistently attended mass and she followed that pattern for many years. It was only later in Stephany's faith walk that she would discover the beauty of the faith and rekindle her devotion to St. Mariana of Jesus, who she learned was a Third Order

Franciscan. Click this link to find out more about Saint Mariana of Jesus. <https://catholicism.org/saint-mariana-de-jesus.html>

Stephany attended public grade and high school. NYU was her first college degree earned in Individualized Studies (Concentration in Communications and voice). Her final Masters degree is in classical voice. She later earned a graduate diploma in music composition and then a Masters in composition. Currently she is working toward her DMA (Doctor of Musical Arts) requiring extensive composing and a rigorous graduate school course. Stephany is teaching four university classes a week in add-on to her studies and this fills her schedule.

Her faith journey is one of God reaching down toward her during her lifetime and revealing himself through the love of animals and St. Francis, then through that still small whisper a few years ago. While attending Immaculate Conception Parish in Salem, MA, Fr. Robert Murray was instrumental in guiding her back to Holy Mother Church. It was in 2021 that her reversion began and through the grace of God experienced the undeniable reality of Jesus present in the Holy Eucharist. She also was inspired by a lady who attended daily mass who was a Third Order Franciscan. She googled Third Order Franciscans and reached out to two communities that popped up and she began Formation with our community of Isolated Tertiaries.

Stephany shared that her entrance into the Novitiate was a moment of an outpouring of grace during the ceremony. This was unexpected, but so consoling. That grace, she shared, changed her and she feels like a new and different person.

The Sorrowful Mother Rosary was a devotion that she had earlier in her conversion and feels called to pick up that devotion once more. Please welcome Stephany Svorinic as an Isolated Tertiary and you will be hearing more from her in the future. Stay tuned!



Mariana of Jesus de Paredes (October 31, 1618 – May 26, 1645).

Venerated in Catholic Church

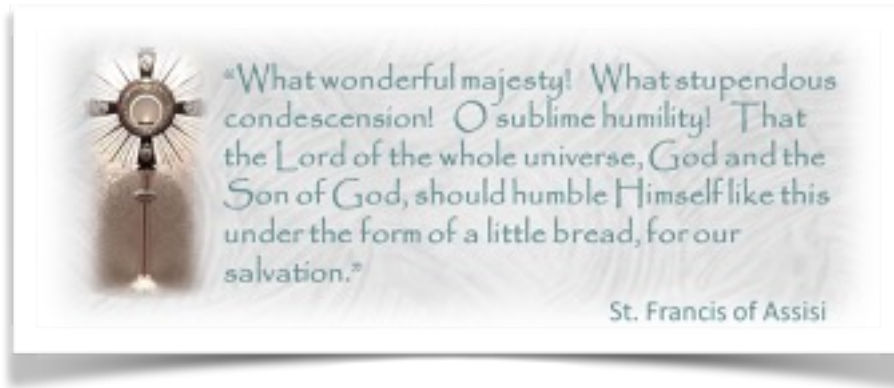
Beatified November 10, 1853, Vatican City by Pope Pius IX

Canonized July 9, 1950, Vatican City by Pope Pius XII

Feast: May 28 for the Franciscan Order

Major Shrine: Church of the Society of Jesus  
Quito, Ecuador





|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| MONDAY    | Judith Inglesby, TOF   |
| TUESDAY   | Linda Menser, TOF  |
| WEDNESDAY | Judith Inglesby, TOF<br>Luis Guzman, TOF<br>Paul & Mary Tag, TOF |
| THURSDAY  | Sandy Baden, TOF<br>Bob Zupanek                                  |
| FRIDAY    | Linda Menser, TOF<br>Pepe Ventosa, TOF                           |
| SATURDAY  | Ericka Witover, TOF<br>Miguel Mahan, 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 for all the intentions of the members of the Isolated Tertiaries Community.

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

ONGOING FORMATION ZOOM GATHERING MONTHLY SCHEDULE: 2023  
PRESENTATIONS

| MONTH            | PRESENTATION               | TOPIC | ARTICLE          |
|------------------|----------------------------|-------|------------------|
| <b>JANUARY</b>   | MARY TAG, TOF              |       | ARTICLE 48       |
| <b>FEBRUARY</b>  | LINDA MENSER, TOF          |       | ARTICLES 49-52   |
| <b>MARCH</b>     | JULIE ELKINTON, TOF        |       | ARTICLE 53       |
| <b>APRIL</b>     | Cancelled due to Holy Week |       |                  |
| <b>MAY</b>       | VIRGIL DANIEL, TOF         |       | ARTICLES 54 & 55 |
| <b>JUNE</b>      | ERICKA WITOVER, TOF        |       | ARTICLES 56 & 57 |
| <b>JULY</b>      | GORDON SMITH, TOF          |       | ARTICLE 58       |
| <b>AUGUST</b>    |                            |       |                  |
| <b>SEPTEMBER</b> | VIRGIL DANIEL, TOF         |       | ARTICLES 59 & 60 |
| <b>OCTOBER</b>   | GROUP DISCUSSION           |       | ARTICLE 61       |
| <b>NOVEMBER</b>  | GROUP DISCUSSION           |       | ARTICLE 62       |
| <b>DECEMBER</b>  | GROUP DISCUSSION           |       | ARTICLES 64-65   |

Our discussion for October will be Article 61. The Article will be read and then discussed with the group. Comments from each person should be short, no more than three minutes so everyone will have a change to share their thoughts.

**ARTICLE 61:**

In accordance with the Rule, tertiaries shall receive the sacrament of penance every month or even oftener; and, when possible they shall have a competent spiritual director. They shall, moreover, examine their consciences daily and correct the sins they have committed by truly repenting of them.

Upcoming Events

**A FRANCISCAN RETREAT**

The annual retreat from the Confraternity of Penitents (CFP) will be taking place on October 11-15 at St. Felix Catholic Center, Huntington, IN.

The CFP, a Community of Franciscan Tertiaries, have extended an invitation to us again this year. Some members of our community attended the retreat last year and it was a great opportunity for prayer, ongoing formation, and fellowship with other Third Order Communities. Space is limited and reservations are required.

For Reservations, please contact CFP via their Website or go: [franciscanthirdorderpenitents.com/retreat](http://franciscanthirdorderpenitents.com/retreat).

Hope you can join us!

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**DAY OF RECOLLECTION**  
By Pepe Ventosa, TOF

Our annual Day of Recollection will take place on Saturday, November 4, 2023. As usual, we will meet at the Shrine of our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted in Youngstown for Mass at 9:00 AM and continue with a full schedule of teaching by Fr. Vit, Confessions, and more. Our day together will end at 3:30 PM.

This year we will have again the opportunity to have Fr. Vit answer our questions on the spiritual life. We are collecting questions to present to Fr. Vit. If you have any questions for him, please send these to Pepe. The questions for Fr. Vit will be selected from those received. The questions/answers sessions will be recorded and posted on our YouTube channel.

## LOVING THE SICK BROTHER

(Study on the Admonitions of St. Francis of Assisi, By: Sandy Baden, TOF)



**Blessed that friar (=Blessed is the servant) who loves his brother as much when he is sick—and can be of no use to him—as when he is well and can be of use to him.**

Lothar Hardick, OFM begins this Admonition with discussing meditative prayer. This leads us to try to understand the importance of our prayer and where the fruits of that prayer would lead us in what we do. Take to heart our sick brothers and sisters and outpour our hearts with love with no expectancy of anything in return. Only with prayer can we accomplish those fruits of the grace God gives us.

Our prayer brings us closer to God in the time we take in that prayer and the love we bring to it. We cannot give to our neighbor if our prayer life is lacking in some way. We, as tertiaries, live in the world and can see people as they go about their lives. Some not even aware of God and others demonstrate the love in their hearts.

The last line of this Admonition reminds us of what President Kennedy had said, “ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country.” In the same respect the last line of this Admonition states, ‘God does not ask how much we have been loved, but how much love we have given.’

When we are in meditation, distracted, or lose the progress we felt in the beginning, it seems so frustrating. As Lothar Hardick, OFM indicates, “we should to say interiorly or even aloud, and give consent, not only in our intellect, but in our heart.” The love to be expressed to a sick brother or sister from our hearts would be as Lothar Hardick, OFM also reiterates, “which is expressed in good action, selfless help, and kindness.”

How do we do this for a person who is confined in the hospital. Confronted, many years ago, with a wonderful lady in our Parish who had a massive stroke, but was able to speak. There were no relatives around her and she seemed she was searching for something. She was a woman with a deep faith in our Lord and she loved the Rosary. In asking her what she needed, she stated, “I cannot seem to pray the Rosary,” as tears welled up in her eyes. I suggested praying the Rosary by her bedside, but no that was not it.

The thought popped into my head! I suggested I would go to our Parish and pray the Rosary for her in the little chapel where she went to Mass every day. I told her to watch the clock at 1:00 PM and I would begin to pray. The look on her face was priceless with the beautiful smile on her wrinkled face, as she was eight-five years old. My dear friend passed away the next day. But what if she was not a dear friend and was someone with whom I was not close to. Would I have done the same?

If we examine our meditative prayer and see what it is lacking, pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance and always pray from the heart. This also comes back to the phrase, “What would Jesus do? Are we capable of selfless help and kindness, and can we put that into good action? Let us pray and bear fruit to love our brother or sister when he or she is sick—‘and can be of no use to us—as when he or she is well and can be of use to us.’

“Remember that when you leave this earth, you can take with you nothing that you have received—only what you have given: a full heart, enriched by honest service, love, sacrifice and courage.”

St. Francis of Assisi

*Save the Date*

OCTOBER 3: TRANSITUS, St. Francis of Assisi

OCTOBER 4: FEAST DAY FOR ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

OCTOBER 5: IT Zoom Gathering: 7:00 PM Eastern Time. 4:00 PM Pacific Time. You can sign in 15 minutes earlier before the meeting begins. Discussion: Article 61.

OCTOBER 7: OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY

OCTOBER 9: Inquiry Formation Group 3: 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 4:00 PM Pacific Time. You can sign in 15 minutes earlier before the meeting begins.

OCTOBER 12: IT Novitiate Formation Group 2: 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 4:00 PM Pacific Time. You can sign in 15 minutes earlier before the meeting begins.

