



Soldiers of Christ

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

November 2023

Sandy Baden, TOF, Editor

Vol. 3, Issue 11

THANKSGIVING DAY

The United States celebrates Thanksgiving as a national holiday with President Abraham Lincoln's support in 1863. Presidents after him proclaimed a national day of Thanksgiving each year until 1942 when a proclamation stated the fourth Thursday in November would be Thanksgiving Day. We celebrate this day with Thanksgiving for our church, country, our family, and all that we have with blessings of the past year.

A special day for gathering relatives to share a turkey or ham dinner and a time to appreciate our freedom in the United States. Freedom to attend Mass and give our thanksgiving blessings in prayer to our Lord Jesus Christ.



The most important way to celebrate Thanksgiving is to attend Mass and receive the Holy Eucharist of our Lord Jesus Christ. The word Eucharist means Thanksgiving, so how appropriate this is to give our thank you to our Lord on Thanksgiving Day? All that we have has been given to us by God, our lives, our talents, our home, our country, our family, and most of all God has given us "free will" to follow Him or not. On Thanksgiving Day, let pray for peace throughout the world

With all the atrocities that are happening in our world today we can be thankful we live in the United States of America. We have our freedom, and this is why our prayer is so important that we keep that freedom in this country. Also pray on this Thanksgiving Day to give thanks to our Lord and praise Him for giving Himself to us in the Holy Eucharist. We cannot forget where our thank you belongs, and that is to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sandy Baden, TOF



Isolated Tertiaries News

We have a new Group of Inquirers, Group 3, with their Initial Formation Team: Ericka Witover, TOF, Mary Tag, TOF, Andrew Ewell, TOF and Brian Kusek, TOF. Missing in the picture: Anne Ewell and Katrina Holt. Please keep in your prayers these Inquirers while they are in the process of discerning their vocation.



ST. ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY, FEAST DAY NOVEMBER 17

(Submitted by Ericka Witover, TOF)



St. Elizabeth of Hungary is also known as St. Elizabeth of Thuringia. She was born on July 7, 1207 to the King of Hungary Andrew II and Gertrude of Merania. While still an infant, her father arranged her marriage to Ludwig IV of Thuringia, which caused her to be sent to the Court of Thuringia for education at the age of four. In 1213 her mother was murdered due to a conflict between German and Hungarian nobles. The event affected Elizabeth so much that she turned to prayer.

In 1221 at age fourteen, she was finally married to Ludwig whom she deeply loved, birthing three children to him. The first two sons pursued nobility, while their daughter entered religious life and became Abbess of a German convent. As Ludwig was now a ruler in Thuringia, he supported Elizabeth's works of charity to the poor and homeless. She practiced penance and spent a great deal of time in prayer.

In 1223 Franciscan friars arrived in Thuringia and taught the then sixteen year old Elizabeth all about St. Francis and his life. Intrigued by his spirituality she began baking bread for hundreds of the city's poor every day. In 1226 when a plague struck she cared for the victims. Unfortunately in 1227 Ludwig succumbed to the plague himself and was buried in the Abby of Reinhardsbrunn, leaving Elizabeth a widow at age twenty. In 1228 she joined the Third Order of St. Francis and lived a strict life of penance imposed on her by her spiritual director. She then founded a hospital and personally attended to the sick the last three years of her life.

Although Elizabeth never met St. Francis, he personally send her a blessing before he passed. On November 17, 1231 after a life of charity, service, and great penance, Elizabeth passed to her eternal reward after being stricken with a fever.

After her death miracles began to be reported from her grave site near the hospital. From 1232 to 1235 numerous reports of healings were investigated and authenticated, leading to her canonization by Pope Gregory IX on May 27, 1235. At the time of the Reformation one of her descendants spread her remains. A tomb of remembrance is in the Elisabeth Church in Marburg, Germany.

Elizabeth of Hungary is the Patron saint of bakers, beggars, brides, charities, death of children, and the Third Order of St. Francis.

St Elizabeth, Pray for us.

XX

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 Affliction 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/answer sessions will be recorded and posted on our YouTube channel.

ERIC WITOVER, TOF

(Submitted by: Ericka Witover, TOF)

Eric Witover was born in San Jose, CA. to Jewish parents. As a child he attended Yiddish 'Shul' (school) and spoke Hebrew. As a teen he moved to Miami, Florida where he spent the next seventeen years of his life. Frustrated by living there, he decided one day, to tack a map of the US on



a wall and throw a dart at it. He decided where ever the dart landed was where he would go. It landed on Manchester, NH, so that is where he moved. Once there, he met Ericka at his job and dated her for two years. During that time he converted to Catholicism realizing it was the 'missing peace' of the puzzle.

In 2012 after being in a car accident, getting knocked down by a galloping horse, and finally falling off a roof, Eric became permanently disabled with a back injury. In 2016 he survived a heart attack, and in 2018 he had a surgical neck fusion.

For the next three years he grew in his relationship with the Lord, but still really didn't feel useful in his injured state. When Ericka transferred to the Third Order Franciscans in 2021, he became interested in the spirituality of St. Francis and realized he could offer his sufferings for the salvation of others. Since then he has been interceding for the Friars, the TOF, and the Isolated Tertiaries as a suffering servant. On October 4th he was made an Honorary Member of the Isolated Franciscan Tertiaries of the OFM Province of the Immaculate Conception.

In the picture Eric is holding his favorite possession that he always keeps in his shirt pocket. A gifted 1st class relic of St. Joseph of Cupertino. Eric Witover has written a poem to describe his life, struggles, and conversion into the Holy Catholic Church:

This is Who I Am

You want me to say who I am to you,
To articulate myself in a line or two.
To say who I was before the Lord
Touched me, and placed His hand on
My life to show what it could be.

I am not sure what it is I must say,
so I will take a few minutes to hit my
Knees and pray. In my past life I
Cared for only me. It did not matter
Who you were, you see.

I walked where I wanted and pushed
And shoved people out of my way. Not
Thinking of the Lord above. For it did not
Matter at all to me, as long as I got what
I wanted, you see.

Fighting, gambling, and stealing had
No meaning to me. If you had what I
Wanted, there was no safe place to
Be. Until one day, the Lord touched
me.

He held out a woman so beautiful to
Me. That woman changed my life,
And through the touch of the Lord
I was made free. Now, I suffer for
Christ like St. Francis of Assisi.

Eric Witover, TOF



ANDREW EWELL, TOF
(Submitted by Debbie Ventosa)



Welcome to the TOF Andrew Ewell, residing in the Pittsburgh, PA area. Andrew was born into a family second of four children. His mother is an only child, raised in the Byzantine Ruthenian tradition and his father, an Irish Catholic, one of eight children raised in the Roman rite. Even though Andrew attended Catholic grade school and high school in Philadelphia he fell away from the faith as many do because he never made the faith his own. God had a plan and at twenty-two years of age he met a man who was a Franciscan of the Renewal. Andrew had questions, the friar shared answers, and the beauty of the Catholic Church took root.

This was the beginning of his Franciscan journey when in 2013 he discerned the way of life with a community of Franciscan Friars in Fort Wayne, IN. He attended seminary for two years where he felt blessed to be able to read the writings from St. Francis, St. Bonaventure and Blessed Don Scotus. It was during these years he developed devotion to St. Leopold Mandic a Capuchin priest and contemporary of St. Padre Pio. Through divine providence Andrew continues to discern with the spiritual direction and aid of Fr. Joe Tuscan, OFM Cap. into the sacrament of holy matrimony. Andrew is consecrated to the Blessed Mother the Immaculate and her protection and guidance remains steady in his discernment. His desire and call was now to build and nurture a traditional Catholic family.

Catholic Chemistry is where Andrew met his future wife Anne and on January 7, 2023 they were married at the Institute of Christ the King in Pittsburgh, PA. Anne's parents are also members there and the vibrant enriching ancient liturgy brings much depth to their faith. Congratulations also go to Andrew on his wedding as well as Anne's pregnancy as she is due May 12, 2024. Anne is currently an Inquirer into the TOF and discerning this way of life.

The apostolate Andrew is involved with, and is known as the "Catholic Land Movement."

Pope Leo XIII and his encyclical ([Rerum novarum](#)) planted the desire to implement Catholic Social teaching back into the importance of a strong family unit and the dignity of man through property and productive agriculture. G.K. Chesterton and Fr. Vincent McNabb's writings have also shed light on building domestically productive households. It is a process that Andrew is helping to nurture those who desire homesteading in the states of Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. In his location, ten family farms have been established sharing agriculture, prayer, and work. Andrew was Professed on October 24, 2023.

It is with warm congratulations that we welcome Andrew Ewell into the TOF community. 7

ONGOING FORMATION ZOOM GATHERING MONTHLY SCHEDULE: 2023
PRESENTATIONS

MONTH	PRESENTATION	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	ERICKA WITOVER, TOF		ARTICLES 56 & 57
JULY	GORDON SMITH, TOF		ARTICLE 58
AUGUST			
SEPTEMBER	VIRGIL DANIEL, TOF		ARTICLES 59 & 60
OCTOBER	GROUP DISCUSSION		ARTICLE 61
NOVEMBER	GROUP DISCUSSION		ARTICLE 62
DECEMBER	GROUP DISCUSSION		ARTICLES 64-65

Our discussion for November will be Article 62. Comments from each person should be short, no more than three minutes so everyone will have a chance to share their thoughts.

ARTICLE 62:

Daily, if possible but especially on Sundays and holy-days, tertiaries shall devote some time to mental prayer or spiritual reading. They shall make frequent use of the Sacred Scriptures, particularly of the holy Gospel, and also of the life of our holy Father Francis and of the other saints of the Seraphic Order. Likewise, by means of the pious exercise of the Way of the Cross, they shall reflect, especially during Lent and on Fridays, on the last sufferings of Christ.

DIVINE MERCY CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP, OCTOBER 7, 2023



Featured speakers, Bishop Joseph Strickland, Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC, Mr. Frank Pavone, and Fr. John Stucco CSC were warmly greeted by the packed Riverside Convention Center in California. Among those attending was our Isolated Tertiary member, Linda Menser, TOF. Linda facilitates the monthly IT gatherings and shared her experience at the conference.

The conference highlighted the above speakers with a beautiful Mass at 4:00 PM, celebrated by Bishop Strickland. The message on the feast of the Holy Rosary was to pray the rosary daily as a weapon against evil.

They emphasized the need to pray for our Pope and priests. These holy men of God were in unity as they spoke with charity and clarity on the pressing issues of our times. The participants were reminded to remain steadfast in the faith and truths of the Catholic Church founded by Jesus and safeguarded by the apostolic successors. The Bible, Catechism, Dogma and Magisterium as our guide will keep us grounded in the truth that does not change.

Attendees were aware of the cancel culture and those who push to embrace behaviors offensive to God. Divine Mercy stands up for the truth and leads others to it through charity and clarity and not capitulation. Whatever the sin God's mercy is greater was the message.



Linda felt privileged to attend the conference, learn and pray for those leaders who courageously live out their vocations without compromise. A truly inspiring and heartfelt day honoring Our Lord and Our Lady.



(Top picture is Linda Menser and Bishop Strickland, center picture is Linda Menser, Mr. Frank Pavone, a friend, and picture on the left is Bishop Strickland.)



"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	Judith Inglesby, TOF Luis Guzman, TOF Paul & Mary Tag, TOF
THURSDAY	Sandy Baden, TOF Bob Zupaneck, TOF
FRIDAY	Linda Menser, TOF Pepe Ventosa, TOF
SATURDAY	Ericka Witover, TOF 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.

ADMONITION XXV LOVING THE ABSENT BROTHER

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



Blessed that friar (=Blessed is the servant) who loves and respects his brother as much when he is absent as when he is present and would not say anything behind his back that he could not say charitably to his face.

This Admonition is related to Admonition XXIV as it states, “this is Part II,” (namely true brotherly love.) However, we are now talking about the absent brother and not the sick brother. What does this mean, “the absent brother?”

What do we say about our brother or sister who is not present among us to be grateful for what we said or what we might have said that may seem hurtful? Lothar Hardick, OFM refers again to prayer and meditation and how important prayer and meditation can be to bear good fruit.

‘True love’ is what we should strive for in our journey towards perfection and put ‘True Love’ into practice, as Lothar Hardick, OFM reiterates. How many times in our lives have we said something behind our brother or sister’s back that we could not say charitably to his or her face? We bring this to confession again and again. The consequences of this sin can be phenomenal to the absent brother or sister and before our Lord Jesus Christ. If only we could remember to catch our tongue when we speak ill of our neighbor.

We do have hope as our Lord has given us the Sacrament of reconciliation and through His suffering on the Cross, and we can make things right. But why not put ‘True love’ into practice and avoid our sin by loving our neighbor as our selves? In reading this Admonition, Lothar Hardick, OFM makes it clear we are brothers and sisters in Christ and as we love our Lord we should love our brother or sister as much.

God created us in His image, love. What does this say of us? We should love our neighbor as ourselves! What a different world this would be today if we all loved everyone around us. What would it be like if we saw our Lord Jesus Christ as He healed the sick, rose Lazarus from the dead, expelled evil from sinners, and preached that God loves us. Let us follow St. Francis on our journey to our heavenly father, taking up our cross, and place “Love” at the center of our lives.

“True Love”

My Lord and my God, where are our hearts? Put love into our souls and help us to see you more clearly. Save us from confusion and anxiety.

My Lord and my God, we are in sorrow as we look for you in all the turmoil in this world today. Why is love so absent?

My Lord and my God, let your love sustain us and guide us into your light. Let the darkness disappear and put love in its place.

My Lord and my God, our prayer is to give ‘True Love’ to our neighbor as you created us in your image. Teach us to love as you love us.

Sandy Baden, TOF

Save the Date

NOVEMBER 1: ALL SAINTS DAY, Holy Day of Obligation

NOVEMBER 2: ALL SOULS' DAY

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 62

NOVEMBER 4: Day of Recollection, Shrine of our Lady Comforter

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

NOVEMBER 16: 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.

NOVEMBER 17: St. Elizabeth of Hungary, TOF

NOVEMBER 21: Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

NOVEMBER 23: Thanksgiving Day

NOVEMBER 26: Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

