

Winter, 2023

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The Troubadour

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



Keeping the Faith



The Poverello glorifies Mary because she has brought the infinite majesty of God close to us, because she has placed God within our grasp.

The Incarnation: Jesus the Son of God takes on human flesh is pivotal in salvation history and the Franciscan tradition. One of the first things St. Francis emphasizes in his Letter to All the Faithful is this divine Motherhood: "Our Lord Jesus Christ is the glorious word of the father, so holy and exalted, Whose coming the Father made known by St. Gabriel the Archangel to the glorious and

Blessed Virgin Mary, in whose womb He took on our weak human nature."

The same thing as evident in his love for the feast of Christmas: The birthday of the child Jesus Francis observed with inexpressible eagerness over all other feasts, saying that it was the feasts of feasts, on which God, having become a tiny infant, clung to human breasts. (2 Celano 199).

Here we find ourselves at the heart of Franciscan devotion to Mary. (Excerpts Called to Commitment)

Spiritual Director

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



Editor

Susan Kramer, TOF

Catholic Quote for Winter, 2023

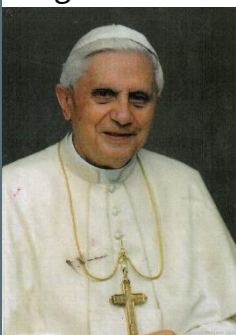
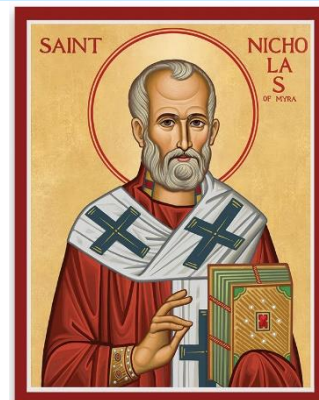


"You have come to us as a small child, but You have brought us the greatest of all gifts, the Gift of Eternal Love. Caress us with Your tiny hands, embrace us with Your tiny arms, and pierce our hearts with Your soft, sweet cries."

St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) Abbot, Mystic, Cistercian, co-founder of the Knights Templar, Reformer of the Benedictine Order, Doctor of the Church

The Heart of Christ and the Heart of Nicholas – Pope Benedict XVI

Nicholas is one of the first people venerated as a saint without having been a martyr... His miracle was not that of great heroism in the face of torture, imprisonment, and death. It was the miracle of constant kindness in everyday life. Another of the legends expresses it very beautifully in this way: Whereas all the other miracles could be performed by magicians and demons, and thus were ambivalent, one miracle was absolutely transparent and could not involve any deception, namely living out the faith in everyday life for an entire lifetime and maintaining charity. People in the 4th century experienced this miracle in the life of Nicholas. ... In this man they understood what faith in God's Incarnation means; in him the dogma of Nicaea had been translated into tangible terms.



The morning star that receives its light from the rising sun – this ancient description of Nicholas is also one of the oldest images of the meaning of Advent. If we are to be continually lighting candles of humanity, giving hope and joy to a dark world, we can only do so by lighting them from the light of God Incarnate... From the light of Christ we are to light the flame of a new humanity, caring for the persecuted, the poor, the little ones – this is the core of the legend of St. Nicholas.

Pope Benedict XVI (1927-2022), born Joseph Ratzinger, was Pope from 2005 to 2013, and then was Pope Emeritus until his death. Pope Benedict grew up in Germany and became a priest after WWII. He was a theology professor, pianist, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Dean of the College of Cardinals, and close friend and advisor to St. John Paul, whom he succeeded as Pope.

Annual Report – Prepared by Pepe Ventosa, TOF

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

		12/2020	12/2021	12/2022	12/2023	1 year change	3 years change
Members in Fraternity	Professed	51	66	73	72		
	Novices	14	3	1	4		
	Total in fraternity	65	69	74	76	+2 (2%)	
Members as Isolated Tertiaries	Professed	1	9	11	19		
	Novices	0	0	5	4		
	Honorary Members	0	0	0	2		
	Total Isolated T.	1	9	16	25	+9 (56%)	
Total Membership		66	78	90	101	+11 (12% ↑)	+35 (53% ↑)

Postulants/ Inquirers	In Fraternity	0	5	11	17
	Isolated Tertiary	0	9	0	14
Total		0	14	11	31

2023 Year in Review – by Pepe Ventosa, TOF

This year we celebrated the 4th year anniversary of the Community of Franciscan Tertiaries of the OFM Province of the Immaculate Conception 12/8/2023.

- On April, 2023, a joint meeting of all involved with Initial Formation was convened at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted. The purpose of the meeting was to standardize Initial Formation by developing an Initial Formation curriculum that can be used by all involved. All participants agreed that this would be beneficial. This work is currently in progress.
- Our 2nd Annual Pilgrimage took place on May, 2023 and was sponsored by the St. Padre Pio Fraternity. We visited St. Philip Neri Church in Dungannon, the oldest continuing congregation in Norther Ohio.
- During the summer months our fraternities had their annual picnic.
- This year the Isolated Tertiaries, along with their monthly zoom gatherings, started meeting once a month in small groups (3-5 members) referred to as “clusters”. Currently there are 4 clusters formed, located in WA, CA, TX and Australia. These cluster meetings have a specific format, with prayer and ongoing formation, and provide support for each member in living their Franciscan vocation.
- The Transitus was celebrated at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted and at St. Nicholas Byzantine Church on October 3rd, 2023.
- Once again members from our 3 local fraternities joined members of the Tau Maria Franciscans and the Confraternity of Penitents at the annual CFP retreat in October, 2023. It was great to see our Franciscan sisters and brothers and to be able to share in prayer, formation and fellowship.
- The Annual Day of Recollection took place in the month of November at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted. At the Opening Mass three Postulants entered the Novitiate and received their TOF habit, scapular and a 5-knot brown cord. If so discerned, these novices will celebrate their Holy Profession in 2024. Please keep Marlene, Carolyn, and Dennis in your prayers.
- Throughout the year, members of our TOF community were involved in multiple ministries, including:
 - Eucharistic Adoration
 - Providing care for the spiritual and material needs of the Friars and the Shrine
 - Praying for the spiritual needs of our Bishops, Diocesan priests, seminarians, and the Friars of the Province of the Immaculate Conception
 - Spiritual support of local seminarians
 - Spiritual and financial support of seminaries in the Moshi Diocese in Tanzania
 - Donation of food items to local parishes' food bank
 - Praying for the unborn and their mothers at abortion centers
 - Worked at prolife booth at local County Fairs
 - Providing Bibles for the incarcerated
 - Providing food for the homeless
 - Promoted the Third Order of St. Francis at our parishes and Catholic conference events



CHRISTMAS IS THE CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS, THE SAVIOUR OF MANKIND

2024: Looking At the Year Ahead – by Pepe Ventosa, TOF

- Those involved in Initial/Ongoing Formation (including those involved with the Isolated Tertiary Community) will meet again in the Spring to discuss and share resources for formation and update on the progress of the Initial Formation Curriculum.
- Our 3rd annual pilgrimage will take place May 18, 2024, sponsored by the Our Lady of America Fraternity. We will visit the Shrine of St. Elizabeth of Hungary in Cleveland, OH. This Shrine was just established by The Most Reverend Edward C. Malesic, JCL, Bishop of Cleveland, on August 2023. St. Elizabeth of Hungary, a Franciscan Tertiary, is the patroness of the Third Order of St. Francis.
- We will have our first “Tridua” August, 2024. See more information in this newsletter.
- Our annual Day of Recollection will take place again in November 2024.
- We are in the process of obtaining a source for Franciscan burial shrouds.
- 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)

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

It has been a year of growth for our fraternity, for which we are very grateful to God.

Currently, we have three Novices who, by the grace of God, will be Professed in 2024. In addition to this, we have several Inquirers who are diligently learning the Franciscan way of life. All of our Formation students are devout and joyful Catholics who are treasured members of our fraternity family, and they are a blessing to us!



One of the Apostolates our fraternity members are active in is daily Eucharistic Adoration. We currently have 25 members involved in this vital activity, with at least one of us in Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament every day of the week. We never forget to pray daily for the spiritual and physical protection of the Pope, and our local bishops (Bishop Fernandes of Columbus, Bishop Bonnar of Youngstown, Bishop Pipta of the Eparchy of Parma, and Bishop Malesic of Cleveland). We also pray for our hard-working parish priests and seminarians, particularly those we have spiritually adopted. These include Arthur Bodenschatz of the Diocese of Youngstown, Joseph Rohan, Alex Krukemeyer, and John Paul Antalek of the Diocese of Cleveland, and Francis Tumaini of the Diocese of Moshi, Tanzania. By extension, we also have an active prayer chain, welcoming prayer intentions from our members, their families and friends, and their parishes.

We look forward to 2024 with optimism, hope, and trust in our good God, who anticipates our every need!

Our Lady of America Fraternity News – by Paul Fedele, TOF

No news this quarter!
A Blessed Christmas to all from Our Lady of America Fraternity, Ashtabula



St. Padre Pio Fraternity News – by Lou Jacquet, TOF



This year's Day of Recollection helped cement the growing relationships between our three fraternities. The day was well-attended by members of our three fraternities. We not only enjoyed the spiritual aspects and guidance from Fr. Vit and Fr. Ryan, but we also enjoyed a family reunion with our fellow Third Order Franciscans from all over Northeast Ohio and West Virginia.

The year ahead will find us older members "catching up" on formation details we missed in the transition stage to the 1883 rule, and our newer members being formed in a deeper style that Formation directors from each fraternity have developed. Our member Julie Elkinton is especially crucial in this process, selflessly coming in all the way from Chester, WV for our meetings and formation sessions.

We look forward to 2024, following in the faithful footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi by serving God and one another with patience, kindness, and joy as befits followers of the Little Poor Man from Assisi!

Franciscan Tertiaries' Tridua 2024 – by Pepe Ventosa, TOF



On August 23 - 25, 2024 we will be having our first "Tridua". A Tridua, also known as a Tertiary retreat, is designed specially for Tertiaries who, due to their own personal commitments, can't get away for several days from home/work for a long retreat. The retreat has a simple schedule, with daily Mass, quiet time for prayer/meditation/personal devotions and a few presentations. Tertiaries can stay at their homes and attend the different activities as able, or they can stay at the retreat place or close by if so desired.

The Tridua will take place at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted. There are a few rooms available at the Shrine on a reservation basis. Fr. Vit is preparing an area on grounds for those who would like to set up a tent or hammock and enjoy God's outdoors creation. There are some hotels close by if so preferred.

Stay tuned for more information will follow!

Nativity Indulgence – Reprinted from Catholic Vote



This Christmas season, Catholics can receive a plenary indulgence by praying in front of a nativity scene located in a Franciscan church.

The indulgence will be available from December 8th, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, through February 2, 2024, the Feast of the Presentation in the Temple of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those wishing to receive the indulgence must pray in front of a nativity scene at a Franciscan church.

Catholics will be able to receive the plenary indulgence under normal circumstances.

A plenary indulgence is a grace granted by the Catholic Church that removes the temporal punishment due to sin. When one receives an indulgence, it always washes away all temporal punishment, but it must be accompanied by a detachment from sin.

In order to receive a plenary indulgence, one must have a detachment from all sin, including venial; receive the Holy Eucharist and the sacrament of confession within 20 days of praying in front of a nativity scene. In addition, those attempting to receive the indulgence must pray for the intentions of the Holy Father.

Initial Formation News – by Debbie Ventosa, TOF

The Formation teams at each fraternity are hard at work compiling a manual to aid each fraternity to teach with more uniformity the TOF Rule of 1883 and Way of Life. The Inquiry, Postulancy and Novitiate materials are being compiled for review by all fraternity formation teams and input.

Julie Elkington TOF, MaryBeth Frabutt TOF, Margaret Sartor TOF, Virgil Daniels TOF and Debbie Ventosa TOF will meet again after Easter to review materials that have been compiled and make suggestions and updates. It is the goal to have a Teacher Manual for the formators from each fraternity as well as spiral bound Student Manual available for purchase at the Shrine's gift shop for those who are going through formation. This will minimize the multiple handouts and help the students stay organized as they learn the materials.

The formation team is also working with Gina Love from the Padre Pio fraternity to assist with securing copies of books that are no longer published. Gina has a background in the publishing field and it is a blessing that she has been using her talents to help us secure formation materials. Please continue to support your formation teams with prayer and attendance at the formation sessions. The input from those living their Franciscan vocation is invaluable.

Isolated Tertiaries Update – by Pepe Ventosa, TOF

Isolated Tertiaries (IT's) are members of our community of Franciscan Tertiaries who are not members of a fraternity. This is due to the lack of a local fraternity in their area.

In 2023 we had five new members professed into the TOF. We also had three Inquirers who entered the Novitiate. These new Novices are preparing to complete their Initial Formation and, if they so discern, profess as Third Order Franciscans in 2024. They live in Missouri, Virginia and North Carolina, and have been attending formation class via zoom under the guidance and instruction of Ericka Witover, TOF (Texas), Julie Elkinton, TOF (Ohio) and Peter Emau, TOF (Washington). Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM, attends the monthly zoom formation meetings providing spiritual direction and teaching.

The Professed Isolated tertiaries have increased in number and currently the community consists of 25 members. In addition to the professed members and novices, we have a new group of 14 inquirers attending the Inquiry Period.

We thank God for those who have been prompted by the Holy Spirit to discern following in the footsteps of our Seraphic Father Francis. And we are grateful for the Friars of the Immaculate Conception Province continued support.

CFP Retreat – by Virgil Daniel, TOF



Seven members of our community of Tertiaries of the Immaculate Conception Province recently attended the annual Confraternity of Penitents (CFP) conference and retreat in October; it was again at the St Felix Center in Huntington, IN. All concerned noted how restful, prayerful, and spiritually uplifting the 4-day experience was. The overall theme this year was the Eucharist. The conference day, day #1, offered the highlight of witnessing the Life Pledge of Ben and Kristen Rinaldo into the Confraternity of Penitents before Fr Joe Tuscan, OFM Cap, the CFP Spiritual Director.

A special Mass followed; then, Ben and Kristen shared their life journey into the CFP as part of the conference program.

The opening talk of the 3-day retreat was presented by Madeline Pecora Nugent, CFP, on the Eucharist in the lives of St Francis, St Clare, St Anthony of Padua, and Blessed Carlo Acutis. (Madeline would know. Her excellent book, Francesco, recently won a Catholic Book Award.) The other retreat sessions, as well as all liturgical events, were presented by Fr Joe Tuscan. He also previewed for us the excellent film, The Miracle Box, on the beauty of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Most inspiring! Fr Joe also shared about the progress of the cause for sainthood of Rhoda Wise and made available to us a biography of the Servant of God Rhoda, as well as some specially blessed holy water from the Rhoda Wise House in Canton, OH. Fr Joe blessed sacramental items for all concerned at the concluding Vigil Mass on Saturday evening.



St. Felix Retreat Center is distinguished as having been the residence of Blessed Solanus Casey, OFM Cap, for some ten years close to the end of his life. His cell has been preserved as it was while he lived there.

Attendees included Julie Elkinton, TOF, from Padre Pio Fraternity and Margaret Sartor, TOF, Master of Formation from Our Lady of the Americas Fraternity; Margaret was accompanied by Joyce Ann White, an Inquirer. Both Julie and Margaret have attended this Retreat previously. Saints Francis & St Clare Fraternity was represented by

Fraternity Minister Prefect, Roberto Meza, TOF, and his wife Maria Elena, TOF. Also attending were Vice Minister Jim Miller, TOF, Pepe

Ventosa, TOF, and Virgil Daniel, TOF. All were repeat attendees except for Maria Elena and Roberto.



Those interested in watching the recorded sessions of both the conference and the retreat can go to the CFP at www.franciscanthirdorderpenitents.com/retreats. The 2022 conference and retreat will also be there.

Save the Dates!

12/25	Christmas Day Holy Day of Obligation
1/1	Feast of Mary, Mother of God Not a Holy Day of Obligation This Year
5/18/24	Annual TOF Pilgrimage planned by Our Lady of America Fraternity (Details TBA)
8/23–25/24	Tridua

*Hail, holy Lady, most holy Queen,
Mary, Mother of God, ever Virgin.
You were chosen by the Most High Father
in heaven,
consecrated by Him, with His most
Holy Beloved Son
and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.
On you descended and still remains all
the fullness of grace and every good.*



Hail, His Palace.

Hail His Tabernacle.

Hail His Robe.

Hail His Handmaid.

Hail, His Mother.

*and Hail, all holy Virtues, who, by grace and inspiration of the Holy Spirit,
are poured into the hearts of the faithful
so that from their faithless state,
they may be made faithful servants of God through you.*

by St. Francis of Assisi