



# Soldiers of Christ

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

April 2024

Sandy Baden, TOF, Editor

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## THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

Feast Day: April 8, 2024



**In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. (Luke 1: 26-31)**

The Solemnity of the Annunciation celebrates the coming of the Angel Gabriel to the Blessed Virgin Mary announcing she would be the Mother of God. The first words to Mary from Archangel Gabriel were, "Hail Mary." These are very significant words indicating the highest form of greeting to any person during those times, as Mary realized. The "Hail Mary" are the first words repeated on each ten beads of the Rosary, and also gives a statement of the importance of that greeting. In Mary's humility, divine grace places her as an instrument of redemption to the world with her Son.

The Blessed Virgin Mary gave her "yes" to Archangel Gabriel to become the Mother of our Lord, and also Joseph gave his "yes" to take Mary as his wife. Mary had complete trust in God that her "yes" to the Annunciation of the Lord, all would be well, while not understanding how all would come to pass. If only our own faith could mirror our Lady's trust in God, then we would not have anything to worry about in our world today.

The humanity of Christ came to be through the willingness of Mary and divine grace from God. Christ in His divine nature and now through the Blessed Virgin Mary brings forth His human nature for our salvation. Mary's life was changed in giving her love and trust to God, and in bringing our Lord Jesus Christ into the world.

The Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ then travels to greet Elizabeth, with her own free will, to help Elizabeth give birth to John the Baptist, and at the same time John is sanctified in the womb at the greeting of his mother. So many miracles took place between Mary, Joseph, and Elizabeth. How can anyone deny the love of God in our redemption through the miracle of the Annunciation of the Lord?

As Mary has an important part to play in God's plan for our salvation, Jesus comes to us through Mary, and in His passion shows the love He has for us. As stated in John 15:13, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." Our Lord suffered, died and was buried, then ascended into heaven, so that we may be united to Christ in the Kingdom of God.

Mary's "Yes" to the Annunciation gives us our Church today and all the Sacraments. The Annunciation embodies our faith as almighty God gives us His son in His divine nature and human nature. It can boggle the mind thinking about this circle of love that God has given when entwined with our salvation. Mary carries her son, the first tabernacle, and through divine grace freely perfects the will of God and accomplishes the plan of God. Let us pray that we as Franciscan Tertiaries of the Third Order can give our "Yes" to our Lord Jesus Christ in perfecting our journey as the Holy Spirit guides us.

*Sandy Baden, TOF*

#### *QUOTE FROM ST. JOHN PAUL II*



*"At the Annunciation, Mary entrusted herself to God completely, with the 'full submission of intellect and will,' manifesting 'the obedience of faith' to him who spoke to her through his messenger. She responded, therefore, with all her human and feminine 'I,' and this response of faith included both perfect cooperation with 'the grace of God that precedes and assists' and perfect openness to the action of the Holy Spirit, who 'constantly brings faith to completion by his gifts.'"*

## **ST. FIDELIS OF SIGNARINGEN, OFM, CAP**

**Feast Day: April 24, 2024**

**Submitted by Sandy Baden, TOF**



*St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen, OFM, CAP was born in 1578 in Sigmaringen, Germany. He received the name of Mark Rey. As did his father, Mark taught philosophy at the University of Freiburg and also earned a degree of Doctor of Law in 1611. He was known never to drink wine, and wore a hair-shirt. Mark was also known for modesty, meekness, and chastity.*

*Mark was known as the poor man's lawyer when he practiced law in Colmar in Alsace, France. He became disenchanted with his practice of law, so he decided to join his brother, George, as a Capuchin friar. In 1612 he received ordination as a priest, joined the Capuchin*

*Franciscans in Freiburg, and was given the name of "Fidelis," meaning faithful.*

*Fidelis began preaching and hearing confessions. He became a guardian of a Capuchin friary in Weltkirchen, Feldkirch. Because of an epidemic in the city, he cured many sick soldiers and many people of the town were reformed. The Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith commissioned him to Graubunden, (Eastern Switzerland) along with eight other Capuchin Friars that were to be his assistants.*

*Fidelis preached during a time of religious persecution at the hands of Calvinist Protestantism. He preached in the Catholic churches, and many Calvinists areas where they held their meetings.*

*On April 24, 1622, when preaching at Grusch, Fidelis stood silent at the end of his sermon, and looking upon Heaven, as he was in ecstasy, he had envisioned his own death. After that sermon many of his companions noticed he seemed to be happy.*

*While continuing to preach Fidelis was confronted by a mob outside the church. The Calvinists were upset that Fidelis was so successful in converting their people. He was told to choose between his Catholic faith or his life. Fidelis's response was, "The Catholic religion is the faith of all ages. I fear not death." He was beaten and stabbed to death.*

*Six months after his death, Fidelis's body was found to be incorrupt, his head and left arm were separated from his body. For some reason, St. Fidelis was not listed in the book of "The Incorruptibles," by Joan Carroll Cruz. St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen was Beatified on March 24, 1729 by Pope Benedict XIII and was Canonized, June 29, 1746 by Pope Benedict XIV.*

## GETTING TO KNOW OUR NOVICES MARY

Submitted by Debbie Ventosa, TOF

Mary Holt and Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM



*At a Carmelite retreat house in California the young Mary Colon felt drawn toward a vocation as a Cloistered Carmelite nun at the age of six years old. Her mother's faith life lived as a Third Order Carmelite with frequent visits to the monastery nurtured Mary's faith. Even though she attended Catholic grade school, high school, and college, the pull of the world led her in a different direction during her early teens and college years. Psychology, philosophy, and graduate studies in clinical psychology was her focus until she met her husband at a military dance. They married*

*civily and her husband was given his first assignment. Her faithful mother's instructions kept coming back to her and she and her husband, Herbert, were married in a Catholic Church ceremony upon his return.*

*Throughout her married life, raising two children, Mary flourished as a wife, mother, daughter, and grandmother of two. Her faithful Mass attendance helped her through troubled times and over the past few years she has grown to love the traditional Latin Mass. She is instrumental in preparing her grandchildren for the Sacraments, and continues to catechism them. Her dedication to her husband, Herbert, and his involvement with the Knights of Columbus as a district deputy has been a joy to her and support for him.*

*Mary's interest in a Third Order community was ignited while reading St. Padre Pio's biography, in which, he encouraged people to become third order members. Mary looked at the Carmelites and a Franciscan community that lived the Rule of 1978. She discovered our Franciscan community that lived the Rule of 1883 and they allowed Isolated Tertiaries. She read the Rule and knew she needed to discover more about Third Order Franciscans and reached out via the website. Mary has been an active participant in Initial Formation and a faithful attendee. It was a delight for many of us in Ohio to meet her in person when she traveled all the way from Arizona to be invested as a Novice on February 24, 2024.*

*Mary is a thoughtful, joyful, and eager student and shared her journey at the reception following her Investiture. She shared her love of baking and as a past member of the Italian/American federation she shared her homemade awesome almond biscotti!*

*She shares the recipe below. When you enjoy this biscotti with your tea or coffee, pray for her as she continues to discern the Franciscan way of life. She hopes to travel back to Ohio with her husband and celebrate her Holy Profession at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted.*

**Ritual of Reception of the Novitiate Ceremony.  
Officiated by Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM**



**Nonna Mary's Almond Chocolate Biscotti**

**Ingredients**

2 cups All-Purpose Flour and 2 cups Oat flour **-OR-** 3 Cups White Flour and 1 Cup Whole Wheat Flour (whichever is your flour preference just be sure its 4 cups total)  
3 Tsp Baking Powder  
1/2 Tsp Salt  
1 Cup Butter (Softened)  
4 oz Almond Paste  
1 1/4 Cups White Sugar  
3 Eggs  
2-3 Tsp Pure Almond Extract  
1 Cup Slivered or Sliced Almonds  
1 Cup Bittersweet Chocolate Chips

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease large cookie sheet.
2. Combine Flour, baking powder and salt, set aside.
3. In dough mixer, mix together butter, almond paste and sugar until creamy. Beat in eggs and almond extract. Add almonds and chocolate chips. Stir in flour mixture until well mixed into dough.
4. Divide dough into 3 large even-sized balls then form each ball into flat rectangle loaves approx 12" L x 4" W by 1.5" thick. (you can do 4 smaller loaves instead if you prefer smaller biscotti.)
5. Bake 20 minutes. Cool on baking sheet for 15 min.
6. Preheat oven again to 350. Cut loaves into 1.5" thick slices. Lay slices on cut side down on baking sheet.
7. Bake 13 minutes on one side, then flip over on other side and bake another 13 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool on wire rack.

**NOTES:**

- 2nd and 3rd bake times may vary according to altitude, oven type and crunchiness preference.
- Instead of adding chocolate chips, you could just melt the chocolate and dip the bottom of the finished biscotti and set on wax paper or parchment to dry.
- For a very Chocolatey Biscotti, you can add 1/2 Cup Cocoa Powder into the dry flour mix.

**Buon Appetito!**

## GETTING TO KNOW OUR NOVICES

Sharif



*Although ensured by my mother, a Filipino Catholic, I was baptized, the lack of exposure to Catholic teachings in my youth left me defenseless against the godless assumptions of secularism. Alongside my mother's love, a glimmer of Christ's light here, was the lived faith of my grandmother who moved in with us when I was thirteen. We shared a room and each night I witnessed her pray the Rosary before the image of Divine Mercy. Her "simple" but unwavering faith only became compelling and comprehensible to me much later in life.*

*In college, my desire to know God, and to find a community of prayer and worship intensified. I was introduced to Islam, which offers black and white theological and moral frameworks, teaches that human*

*beings are characterized by slavehood to God as Master, as well as legal strictures for all aspects of living through which one enacts their servitude.*

*Somehow that was appealing then, as it supplied me with a ready made worldview, and filled my days and nights with prescriptives for every situation. Over many years those dynamics wore away at my spirit and left me terrified of God and exhausted in my worship. To give an example: I was continually in the sink at home and in public restrooms as we needed to perform elaborate washing rituals constantly to maintain ritual purity before performing daily prayers or even touching the Quran. While I became a compliant and obedient "slave" of God, I certainly didn't receive what my soul needed—and I would argue, all people do: experiencing intimate friendship and filial love in relation to God. It was thus all the more poignant when I would later read in the Gospels, **"I no longer call you servants...but I call you friends."** (John 15:15). What I have concluded is that these rigid practices, for me, came at the expense of a personal relationship with the God who loves and cares for us more than we could possibly understand.*

*In 2008, my wife, young daughter, and I moved to Amman, Jordan to further my studies in Islam. Our family grew, and in 2009, our son was born. I studied under venerable Islamic scholars, gained Arabic fluency, and teaching authorizations in several Islamic fields. I returned to the U.S. in 2014 to begin a career in collegiate chaplaincy. Despite launching a successful career, completing a Master's degree in Religious Studies at Hartford Seminary, and having a faith or campus/prison/community ministries, particularly through the pained life stories and concerning religious understandings of the Muslims I served. An all too familiar pattern emerged as I sought to support the spiritual health of my fellow Muslims: each shared, like me, the ingrained sense that God's love and mercy was only "earned" through incessant displays of obedience.* 6

*We had never experienced a comforting pastoral encounter and I began to sense that perhaps Islam was incapable of offering it. My heart broke in increments daily to live and witness the impacts of a teaching that implies only conditional, restricted access to God's love.*

*These realizations signaled new movements of the heart that became impossible to suppress within. When I sensed that my religious training lacked the capacity to foster spiritual wellness among those I served, I enrolled in a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program which teaches everyone from non-clergy to ministers of any faith the foundations of spiritual care. Though CPE aims to be adaptable to any religious tradition, its roots and ethos are thoroughly Christian. Alongside my learning cohort (all of whom were Christian), when not meeting with patients, we closely examined our pastoral practice. It became obvious that my Christian counterparts had vastly more theological and pastoral wellsprings through which to cultivate spiritual health amid dire circumstances. Each possessed and almost innate fluency and expertise with care for the human soul. But I still did not understand entirely why. It became clearer as we spent over sixteen-hundred hours training in bedside ministry, supporting patients, families and staff through the most intense and challenging experiences that human beings face. In this space of total vulnerability, confronted with patients' pending mortality, the sights and stench of illness and death, our moments ranged from fear and doubt, to incomprehension and trust. Here, I encountered God as I never had.*

*With time and God's grace, I began to intuit through accompanying the ailing and dying that the greatest means of spiritual comfort one can offer is not found in formulaic phrases or actions, but a kind of **presence** that resembles the divine example of Christ. Christ epitomizes the meaning of **compassion**, literally, **to willingness to suffer with**. Christ as God's pastoral intervention was a revelation for me; His presence made felt and perceptible for a world wounded and in need of deepest healing. In Christ, God restores the human condition by entering into our very dysfunction to transform and sanctify us. His suffering, I finally understood, offers us the potential to make meaning of our own.*

*I was forever changed through this ministry and although I was still working as a Muslim Chaplain at the time, my heart was being prepared to receive Christ more fully each day. With every patient visit the Holy Spirit beckoned more strongly. One critical turning point occurred in early 2020 when I was called to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit in the middle of the night to perform an emergency Baptism. A young Catholic couple had just welcomed their first child, but under tragic circumstances. The boy was severely premature and would pass within the hour. As the chaplain on call, I was summoned to support their urgent spiritual need. As I gathered us, I beheld the loving gaze of a mother caressing her child, and the boy's father tenderly pouring water upon their son's head. While he read the Church's invocations, I held the tool and bowed my head in silent prayer. In a sterile hospital room, surrounded by nurses and caregivers, we created a solemn sacred space in which we felt God's presence. It was the first time I'd ever recalled my own baptism, not as a distant memory, but with longing for the faith and promise that it offers.*

Months later, attending Sunday Mass with my wife had become the highlight of my week. Then, in March 2021, another sign of God. During the opening procession for Mass, my focus fell upon a statue of our Blessed Mother. With my sight oddly drawn to fixate on her image, I heard in my heart a soothing, maternal voice say with pristine clarity, **“Come home, my son.”** I broke down, completely inconsolable. Our Blessed Mother was calling me back to the faith I had not so much abandoned but had never given a chance to penetrate my stubborn defenses. I pray to never be able to unhear her loving invitation from that morning. As Fr. Anthony Ligato counseled me on my path to Confirmation later that year, **“The Lord has always kept you close.”** To him, my Confirmation in the Church in November 2021 was not so much the start of something new, but God completing a work that had already begun in my many years earlier.

That work continues daily as the Lord heals and rebuilds me with His Precious Body and Blood through Holy Communion. As the Lord teaches us, **“I have come that they have life, and have it more abundantly.”** (John 10:10)

This abundance is now felt in other core dimensions of my life. The fruits of Holy Communion flow into my marriage, family, and profession. As I try to resemble Christ in my home and workplace, there is nothing mechanical or draining to the should in this emulation. Its nature centers on cultivating the heart, focused as Christ was on the total offering of self in loving concern for another. And though I no longer work as a chaplain, my current role as a college dean asks me to draw on authentic pastoral approaches daily in my support of students experiencing life in all of its stress and complexities. As my journey in the Lord still unfolds, I take ultimate comfort and solace in having arrived home to the Catholic Church.

I came upon the way of St. Francis last year, around the moment I had clarity about how I wanted to live my Catholic faith. It was summarized in my prayerful intention, **“God help me find the path that allows me to most closely follow Jesus.”** As I walk through this door onto prayerful discernment of the Franciscan Way, it’s become evident to me that this path is a wonderful expression of living out the Gospel. I experience this Way as a method of seeing with the eyes, heart, and mind of Christ. A path of simplicity, penance, and ultimately, seeking to emulate the love of Christ in all circumstances. My heart is finding relief and peace in discovering the Franciscan Way and I pray that with God’s help, and continual practice it will only deepen and grow.

I chose St. Francis of Assisi as my patron saint as he embodies the reality of taking on **“the new man”** in Christ. His desire to live in complete union and conformity to Christ is my own aspiration so he is a most worthy patron on my journey to follow Christ more perfectly.

May Our Blessed Mother, St. Francis, and all the holy men and women of God pray for us.



## ONGOING ZOOM MONTHLY GATHERING ON APRIL 7TH

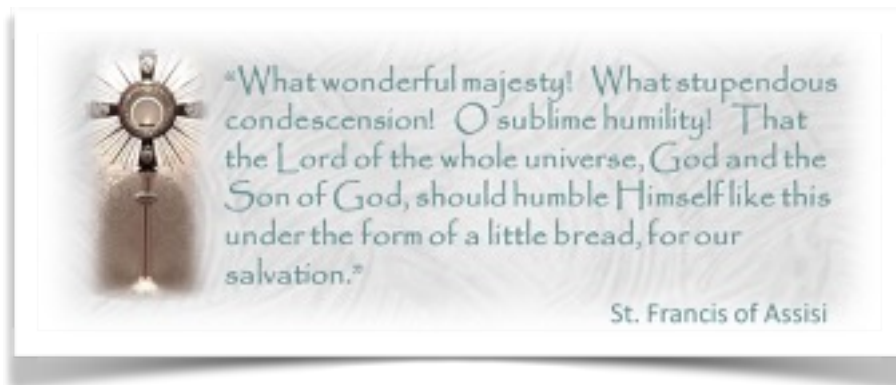
*Our discussion for April will be Article 72. Comments from each person should be short, no more than three minutes so everyone will have a chance to share.*

### ARTICLE 72:

*They shall take the greatest care to make life within the family pleasant and happy, even when means are limited. The furnishings of the house shall mirror the Franciscan spirit as far as possible. The crucifix, so dear to our holy Father Francis, shall occupy the principal place in the living rooms and bedrooms. Home life shall be sanctified each day by morning and evening prayers, and by grace before and after meals. The following practices are strongly recommended: the reading of the New Testament or of the life of some saint; the recitation of the rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary or of the Franciscan Crown; and the consecration of the family to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, annually renewed.*



Painting of St. Francis, by Sandy T. Baden, TOF



## **EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION ISOLATED TERTIARIES SCHEDULE**

<b>MONDAY</b>	<b>Judith Inglesby, TOF</b>
<b>TUESDAY</b>	<b>Linda Menser, TOF</b>
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	<b>Luis Guzman, TOF Judith Inglesby, TOF Paul &amp; Mary Tag, TOF</b>
<b>THURSDAY</b>	<b>Sandy Baden, TOF Bob Zupanek</b>
<b>FRIDAY</b>	<b>Linda Menser, TOF Pepe Ventosa, TOF</b>
<b>SATURDAY</b>	<b>Ericka Witover, TOF Peter Emau, TOF Miguel Mahan, TOF</b>
<b>SUNDAY</b>	<b>Linda Menser, TOF</b>

*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 the increase in religious vocations in their community and for all the intentions of the members of the Isolated Tertiaries Community.*

## ADMONITION XXVII—PART 4 VIRTUE AND VICE

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

***Where there is peace and contemplation, there is neither care or  
restlessness.***



*In considering Lothar Hardick's, OFM, analysis of peace and contemplation one could comprehend they are a virtue. But the word care would never have come to mind as a vice. But we can come to understand peace is the opposite of care as contemplation is with restlessness.*

*Explaining the word care and attaching it to the word annoyance we can then understand the contrast of peace and care which brings restlessness or excitement as Lothar Hardick explains.*

*Lothar Hardick implies that care, in Francis's mind, would prove as evil, therefore, care and restlessness, or annoyance, would be a vice. All of our attention must be given to God and He will give you peace. Rather than living in care or restlessness we need to bring ourselves in to peace and contemplation. Prayer within our heart and knowing that God always leads the way for our salvation.*

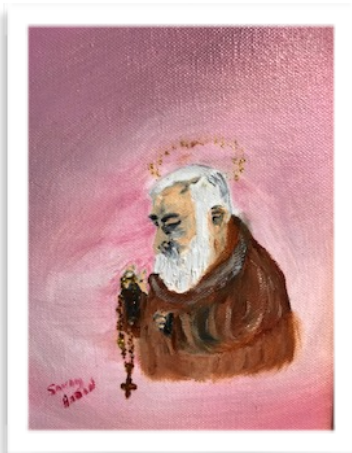
*This has brought into light of the times of being excited about something and now realizing how anxious the state of the soul was at the moment. In understanding this anxiety we should consider entering into contemplation each day with our Lord and this state of anxiety might not happen. Our hearts and minds would be at peace because we would be in constant communication with God. As Lothar Hardick states: "Contemplation is living in accordance with God's revelation of himself. In Contemplation man turns the whole of his life towards God and penetrates into the light of God's existence."*

*This also brings into mind a beautiful prayer that was given to us by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, which could be repeated through out the day:*

*Come, Lord Jesus,  
live in my mind,  
dwell in my heart,  
be my companion  
on the journey of life.*

*As Lothar Hardick again explains, “Francis was not thinking of contemplation or meditation as an exercise ....contemplation was a fundamental spiritual attitude in which man encounters God.” This is important as we live and walk in our world today in the presence of God and in doing His will. It will bring us, “peace and contemplation and therefore, is neither care nor restlessness.*

#### **QUOTES FROM ST. PADRE PIO**



*“Peace is simplicity of spirit, serenity of mind, quietness of soul, and the bond of love. Peace is the order, the harmony within us.*

*“Don’t worry to the point of losing your inner peace. Pray with perseverance, with faith, with calmness and serenity. Love Jesus; when you love Him much, you will love sacrifice even more.”*

*“Pray, hope, and don’t worry. Worry is useless. God is merciful and will hear your prayer.”*

**St. Padre Pio**

*Painting by: Sandy Baden, TOF*

Save the Date

**APRIL 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. Discussion on Article 72.*

**APRIL 7:** *Divine Mercy Sunday*

**APRIL 8:** *The Annunciation of the Lord.*

**APRIL 18:** *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.*

**APRIL 24:** *St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen, OFM, CAP.*

**APRIL 25:** *IT NOVITIATE FORMATION GROUP 3: 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 4:00 Pacific Time. You can sign in 15 minutes earlier before the meeting begins.*

*Let us keep in our prayers those people who are waiting for Inquiry to start as they discern their vocations into the Third Order Franciscans as Isolated Tertiaries.*

