



Soldiers of Christ

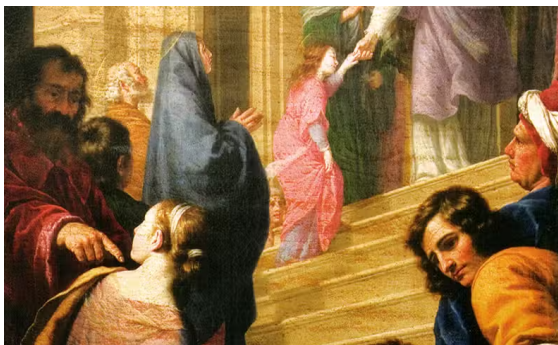
Newsletter of the
Isolated Franciscan Tertiaries
of the OFM Province of the
Immaculate Conception

November 2025

Sandy Baden, TOF Editor

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THE PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY NOVEMBER 21, 2025



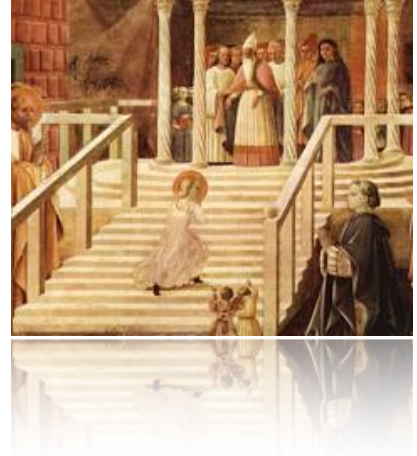
In last years Soldiers of Christ Newsletter, we spoke of Mary and what her life was like in the Temple until her marriage to St. Joseph. This year we will turn our thoughts in a different direction concerning the life of Mary and her Presentation into the Temple.

There is nothing in the bible concerning Mary's birth or childhood, but only the genealogy through the lineage of David. So what are we to make of this celebration of "The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary," and why is it so important?

Mary's story comes from the Aprocypthal writings where we learn of her parents, Joachim and Ann in the Protoevangelium of James. It tells us also of Mary and her holiness and dedication to God within the walls of the Temple. Her parents were considered to be wealthy and had made a vow to God to present their daughter to the temple at age three as they were blessed by God for giving them a child.

The acceptance of the Catholic Church of the Presentation of Mary into the Temple is viewed as a holy and living Tradition, based on the Apocryphal writings. It is stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church #971:

“All generations will call me blessed”: “The Church’s devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship. The Church rightly honors The Blessed Virgin with special devotion. From the most ancient times the Blessed Virgin has been honored with the title of ‘Mother of God,’ to whose protection the faithful fly in all their dangers and needs...”



An Apocryphal gospel was written in the first six centuries, A.D. in the same style as a gospel, and would be attributed to one of the Apostles. It is also believed these are historic facts which are widely known by long standing oral tradition.

In “2 Maccabees 3:19-20” gives credence to the fact that there were women who remained in the Temple as virgins in prayer, and is believed that Mary would have been one of them. Two books, 1 & 2 Maccabees, are included in the Catholic Bible but not in Protestant Bibles. Mary would have been allowed for Temple service because of her connections within her family, such as her cousin Elizabeth, who was of the priestly tribe of Aaron. (Lk. 1:34).

*Mary’s “Presentation into the Temple,” tells us she was consecrated to God from her childhood to prepare her to be the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. Mary was educated in the Scriptures and was pure in her virginity and in her love of God. Mary was the first disciple of Christ and a model of faith as she had said, (Lk. 1:38), **“Let it be done unto me according to your word.”***

Sandy Baden, TOF



GREETINGS FROM BETHLEHEM, THE BIRTHPLACE OF OUR LORD
Submitted by: Gordon Stanley Smith, TOF



Gordon Stanley Smith, previously known as a TOF, has discerned to enter the First Order of Friars Minor, OFM. His formation began on September 15, 2025, under the Province of the Custody of the Holy Land. “Custodia Terrae Sancte,” located at Saint Saviour’s Monastery in the Christian quarters in Jerusalem. Gordon states:

I am thrilled to share I have finally arrived in the Holy Land. Being in Bethlehem, the site of our Savior’s birth, is truly a profound experience. The Custodian of the Holy Land has been stationed here in Bethlehem for over 800 years, and the monastery next to the Grotto of the Nativity has a vibrant presence.

Celebration of Mass

Each day, Holy Mass is celebrated in the Grotto, and at noon a procession moves from

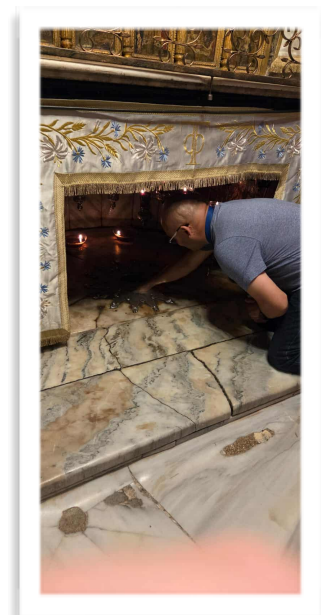
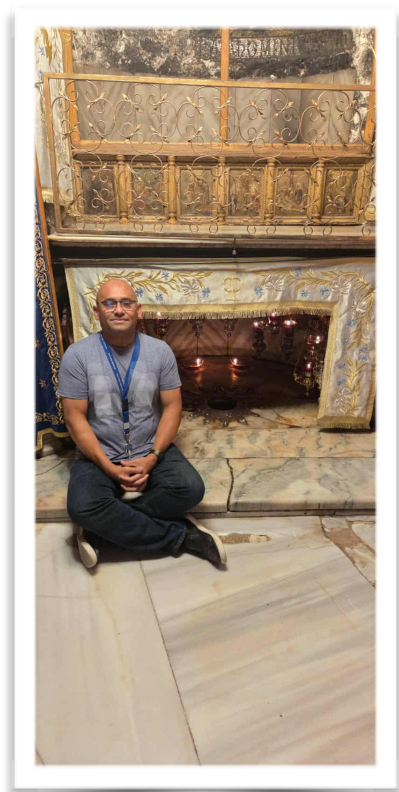
the Latin Rite Chapel of St. Catherine to the Grotto. This is part of our daily observance at the Church of the Nativity, where we share this sacred space with our Greek Orthodox and Armenian Orthodox friends.



I have learned that typically, there would be ten to fifteen busloads of pilgrims and tourists visiting the Basilica of the Nativity. However, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the beginning of the conflict in October 2022, we now see only one or two buses a day.



The local Palestinian community relies heavily on the influx of pilgrims to support their hotels and restaurants. However, things have been quiet, and many families are struggling. We continue to pray for a swift resolution of the situation in Gaza, hoping it will pave the way for pilgrims to return and experience the places where our Lord Jesus Christ was born, lived, and sanctified.

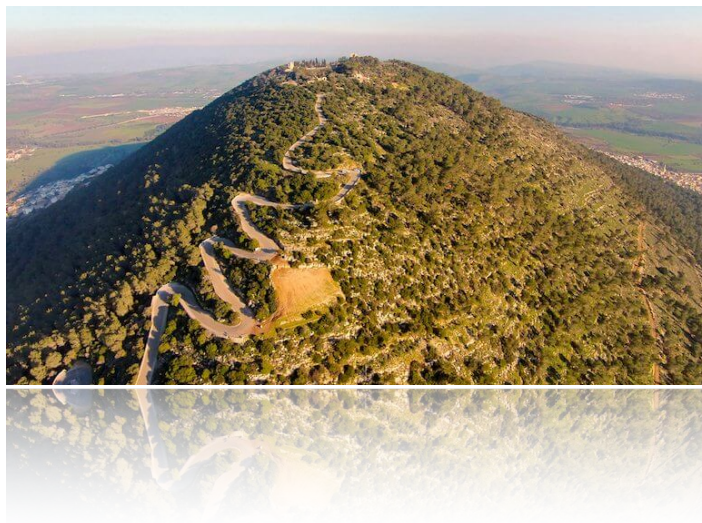


I have been in Bethlehem for a month now, and after the Feast of St. Francis on October 4th, I will be moving to the Church of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor in Northern Israel, where I will establish my permanent residence and offer support to the community. The Custodian oversees 50 holy sites across the Holy Land, including Israel, Palestine, Syria, Jordan, and Cyprus, as well as three monasteries located in Washington D.C., Rome, and Buenos Aires, Argentina.



In my new community at Mount Tabor, there are four friars and eight aspirants. My greatest challenge now is to learn to speak and read Italian, as it is the official language of the congregation in the holy land and spoken in community.

Missing you all, Blessings from the Holy Land!



THE FRANCISCAN BASILICA OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

The Franciscan Basilica of the Transfiguration



Mt. Tabor



*The Basilica of the Transfiguration or the Chapel of Mt. Tabor is also called **The Franciscan Basilica of the Transfiguration**. It was completed in 1924 by Antonia Barluzzi and stands alongside the Greek Orthodox Monastery, which is not usually open to the public.*

Mt. Tabor is about 19 miles from Nazareth and is approximately 1,886 feet high. Access to the summit of Mt. Tabor is a winding road about 1.2 miles. When you reach the top there are three sections: The Franciscan Basilica on the right, the Greek Church area on the left, and then the Flavours ruins.



The Franciscan Basilica of the Transfiguration was built upon the ruins of Byzantine and Crusader churches. The main part of the church represents Jesus' transfiguration and the Chapels in the church's two towers are in honor of Moses and Elijah. There are other chapels within the church that are dedicated to other biblical figures. It's location is on the summit of Mt. Tabor in the Galilee region of Israel. It is the location in which Jesus'

apostles, Peter, James and John, witnessed the divine glory of Jesus, known as the Transfiguration, as He spoke to Moses and Elijah (Mt. 17: 1-8, Luke 9: 28-36 and Mark 9: 2-8.)

VIRTUAL MONTHLY GATHERING NOVEMBER 6, 2025

Our topic during our monthly Zoom Gathering will be presented by Sharif, TOF, on the subject of **“Confession.”**



Sharif was Professed at Holy Family Parish in Little Falls, New York on June 7, 2025. His grandmother was his inspiration to become a Catholic.

Sharif has a Masters Degree in Religious Studies from Hartford Seminary.

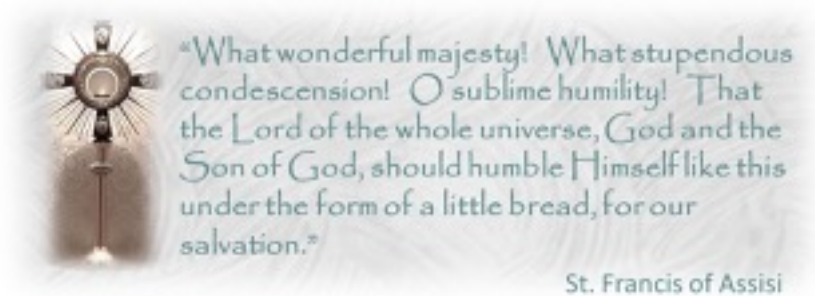
He is married and has two children, one daughter and one son.

We look forward to his presentation on Confession.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Annual Day of Recollection is taking place on November 8th at the OFM Province of the Immaculate Conception. We encourage all to attend, especially those who are in driving distance to the Shrine. A donation of \$12.00 would be appreciated to help pay for lunch, if you are able. RSVP to Pepe Ventosa, TOF.





EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION ISOLATED TERTIARIES SCHEDULE

MONDAY

***Nancy Caraballo
Judith Inglesby, TOF***

TUESDAY

Linda Menser, TOF

WEDNESDAY

***Nancy Caraballo
Luis Guzman, TOF
Judith Inglesby, TOF
Paul & Mary Tag, TOF***

THURSDAY

***Mary Colon, TOF
Bob Zupanek, TOF***

FRIDAY

***Sandy DeWaal, TOF
Linda Menser, TOF
Pepe Ventosa, TOF***

SATURDAY

***Peter Emau, TOF
Miguel Mahan, TOF
Ericka Witover, TOF***

SUNDAY

Linda Menser, TOF

Please pray 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.

ADMONITION XV

Study of the Admonitions of St. Francis of Assisi, Lothar Hardick, OFM

By: Sandy Baden, TOF



“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Mt. 5-9). They are truly peacemakers who are able to preserve their peace of mind and heart for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, despite all that they suffer in this world.”

After reading Admonition XV, it is very clear that we should become peacemakers in our hearts and minds in order to inherit the Kingdom of God. We are truly blessed as we “already share in that salvation,” as Lothar Hardick, OFM states in the first paragraph of this Admonition, as he reads the mind and heart of St. Francis.

Lothar Hardick, OFM talks about the word peace and compares the meaning of peacemakers towards our neighbors, but first we must look into our hearts and minds in living the peace of God within us before we can be peacemakers. Sometimes this not an easy task as we look at the chaos around us today. But we must be obedient in our prayer and trust in our Lord that our prayers are heard and know God will respond one way or another.

The peace of God will always begin in our hearts and in our prayers with the knowledge of God’s will and love for us. Trusting in our Lord is the key to our obedience. When we find peace within us we can then bring that peace to others around us as peacemakers.

The prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi that originally had been known as, “Make me an Instrument of Your Peace,” first appears in 1912 in a spiritual magazine called La Clochette and was attributed to the magazine’s editor, Fr. Esther Bouquerel. In the year 1967, the song and music was accredited to Sebastian Temple, (1928-1997), as we know it today. Sebastian Temple also was a Third Order Franciscan.

There is no evidence the “Prayer of St. Francis” came from any documentation in our Seraphic Father’s writings or he had written this prayer. The beautiful hymn and prayer we all love so much actually says it all in regards to how we should live peace in our hearts and spread the Gospel as St. Francis of Assisi had also lived his life. Nothing more would need to be said.

**Sebastian Temple, Artist
(1928-1997)**

Sebastian Temple was an influential folk Mass composer. He grew up in South Africa and moved to London in 1951. In 1958 he came to America and converted to Catholicism and then became a Third Order Franciscan.

He is most remembered for “The Prayer of St. Francis.” Before his death in 1997 “The Prayer of St. Francis” was sung by the Westminster Abbey Boys Choir at the funeral of Princess Diana. Apparently it was one of Diana’s favorite songs. Sebastian died in Tucson, Arizona.



***Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred let me bring your love,
Where there is injury your pardon Lord,
And where there’s doubt true faith in you.***

***Make me a channel of your peace,
Where there’s despair in life, let me bring hope,
Where there is darkness, only light,
And where there’s sadness, ever joy.***

***O Master grant that I may never seek,
So much to be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love with all my soul.***

***Make me a channel of your peace,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
In giving of ourselves that we receive,
And in dying that we are born to eternal life.***

Save the Date

NOVEMBER 2: DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME ENDS

NOVEMBER 6: IT ZOOM GATHERING: 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 4:00 PM Pacific Time. Discussion Topic to be presented by Sharif, TOF, **“Confession.”**

NOVEMBER 13: IT NOVITIATE FORMATION GROUP 4: 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 4:00 PM Pacific Time.

NOVEMBER 17: ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY, Patron of Third Order

NOVEMBER 20: INITIAL FORMATION INQUIRY GROUP 5: 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 4:00 PM Pacific Time.

NOVEMBER 21: PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

NOVEMBER 27: HAPPY THANKSGIVING



NOVEMBER 29: INDULGENCE ON THE FEAST OF ALL FRANCISCAN SAINTS

