

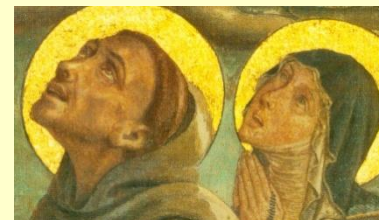
December, 2025

Volume 6, Issue 12

Il Poverello

The newsletter of the SS Francis and Clare Fraternity
of the Third Order of St. Francis

*O holy Father, protect those in Your name (John 17:11) whom You have given to me in the world; they were Yours and You have given them to me. (John 17:6)
And the words which You gave to me I have given to them... - St. Francis of Assisi*
www.thirdorderfranciscans.com



Something to Consider (from the Italian Sons and Daughters of America)

In December 1223, in a rocky grotto near the hill town of Greccio, about 50 miles north of Rome, St. Francis of Assisi staged what is widely considered the first live Nativity scene.



The inspiration came from Francis' travels to the Holy Land between 1219 and 1220. Moved by the sacred sites associated with Christ's birth, life and resurrection, he sought to recreate the Bethlehem experience for believers "with our bodily eyes." By late 1223, while awaiting papal approval for the rule that would establish the Franciscan Order, Francis returned to Greccio, where he had long preached to villagers and shepherds, according to the National Catholic Register.

Two weeks before Christmas, Francis asked Giovanni Velita, the local lord of Greccio, to prepare a grotto with a hay-filled manger and live animals, including an ox and donkey. On Christmas Eve, townspeople gathered by flickering torchlight for Mass. Francis proclaimed the Gospel and preached on the humility of Christ's birth, contrasting the simplicity of the manger with worldly grandeur.

Contemporary accounts, including those by his early biographer Thomas of Celano, describe the event not as a display of statues but as a sensory, living representation meant to evoke Bethlehem itself.

According to tradition, a villager witnessed a miraculous appearance of an infant in the empty manger, embraced by Francis. In the days that followed, the straw from the manger was said to bring healing to animals and to women facing hardship.

Francis' living Nativity at Greccio marked a turning point in Christian devotional life. In the centuries that followed, his dramatic reenactment inspired churches across Italy and Europe to create sculpted Nativity displays, first as fixed reliefs or life-size statues set within chapels. By the 1500s, artisans, especially in central Italy and Naples, began crafting smaller, movable figurines for homes, transforming the Greccio living nativity into a personal devotional practice.

Fraternity Council

Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM
– Spiritual Director
Roberto Meza, TOF
– Minister
James Miller, TOF –
Vice-Minister
Debbie Ventosa, TOF –
Master of Formation
Mary Dye, TOF – Secretary
Therese Harper, TOF –
Treasurer
Virgil Daniel, TOF –
Councilor
Rick Dunlap, TOF –
Councilor
Pepe Ventosa, TOF –
Councilor
Susan Kramer, TOF
– Newsletter

**Next Gathering– Sunday,
December 21 – 1:30 PM
St. Nicholas Byzantine Parish
1051 E. Robinson Ave.,
Barberton, OH 44203**

We are expecting you!

Franciscan Quote of the Month

*Let us live in joy and love during this holy time,
awaiting the birth of our Savior with hope and faith.*

**St. Francis of Assisi, OFM (1181-1226) – Feast Day October 4
Salesman, Soldier, Deacon, Stigmatist, Founder of the Franciscan Order**



Eucharistic Adoration



Sunday

Betty DeMarco, TOF
Marlene Walker, TOF

Monday

Rose Akins, TOF
Louise Daniel, TOF
Virgil Daniel, TOF
Chris Devore, TOF
LeeAnn Devore, TOF
Judith Hoyt, TOF

Tuesday

Michael Butts, TOF
Eileen Dunlap, TOF
Rick Dunlap, TOF
Therese Harper, TOF
Jerry Johnson
Larry McNutt, TOF
Lucy McNutt, TOF
Maria Elena Meza, TOF

Roberto Meza, TOF
Carol Perrine, TOF
Cindy Russo, TOF

Wednesday

Mary Dye, TOF
Bill Marshall, TOF
Jim Miller, TOF

Thursday

Joanne Angeletti, TOF
Denise Williams, TOF

Friday

Robert Burtscher, TOF
Pepe Ventosa, TOF

Saturday

Susan Kramer, TOF

*The apostolate of daily Eucharistic Adoration is **VITAL** to our Fraternity. It does not depend only on the 26 brothers and sisters listed above and is not only limited to one day. If you wish to take a place on the Adoration list, please contact Susan Kramer. When you find yourself at church, say a prayer of adoration to our good Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.*

December Anniversaries and Birthdays

Profession Anniversaries

Joanne Angeletti, TOF – 39 Years

Julia Tarulli, TOF – 27 Years



Birthdays

Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM – 12/16

Jennifer Kerns, TOF – 12/23

Stand for Life



There are no scheduled Stand for Life attendees until Spring because of harsh weather conditions. If you choose to witness to the Church's teaching on life by praying at the abortion clinic, don't forget our rules for your own safety.

Remember to use the residential parking around the corner. Do not use business parking or Acme's parking – you will be towed. It may be easier to pray without distractions across the street, rather than in front of the clinic. Be sure to always remain on the sidewalk. If you cannot fulfill your commitment, find a substitute. *NEVER* go alone to the clinic – pray from home if your partner will be absent and you cannot find a substitute.

Hospitality and Little Portion

Our December Gathering will be our annual Christmas Party!!! Mary Dye, TOF will be in touch very soon with food requests and assignments for our Christmas feast!



The Little Portion ministry is suspended until Spring because of the harsh weather conditions. The Little Portion Apostolate ministers to the homeless and street people of Canton and Akron by providing a simple meal of sandwiches, fruit, and anything individually wrapped for our brothers and sisters in Christ – usually at least 2 meals. You may also add small sized toiletries such as Purell, soap, religious articles, disposable razors, etc. Tube socks are always very useful. Or you may want to deliver the offering. **If you are interested in helping, please contact Mary Dye, TOF.**

As often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me.

Formation Class Updates by Debbie Ventosa, TOF

Our beloved Novices - John Wilson, Jerry Johnson, Jack Kellogg and Andrea Ferraro – are now our fellow Third Order Franciscans!!! Their permanent Holy Profession took place November 8 at the Day of Recollection in Youngstown at the Shrine.

God willing, Tony Perez will soon partake in his Holy Profession in March of 2026. Tony is a Novice of our fraternity and is doing his Initial Formation with the Isolated Tertiaries because of time and previous commitment restraints. But that hasn't stopped him from joining us at our monthly Gatherings and other events! Take the time to get to know our newest Franciscans and Tony. **WE ARE BLESSED, INDEED!!!**

Currently we have nine individuals in the Inquirers group. We are due to lose Maureen in January as she will start her Formation with the Padre Pio Fraternity. However, she will be at our December class and Gathering.

Please continue to pray for the students and the Formation Team!

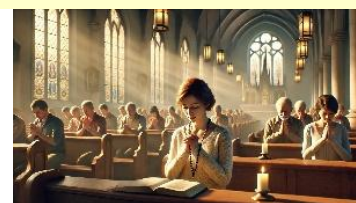
These are the dates for formation for the current Inquirers:

Formation Class for Inquirers (9 Inquirers!): **December 15 January 5 January 19**

Prayer Updates

Please feel free to contact Rick and Eileen Dunlap, TOF if you have personal prayer requests that you would like our members to intercede upon.

It is always encouraging for us to get updates on those for whom we pray. Please don't text with updates – simply send an email to Rick or Eileen and they will let those who are praying know the results of their prayers!

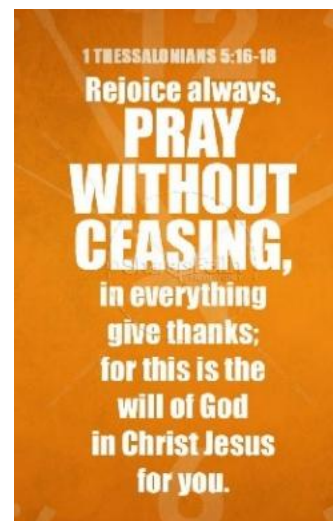


Eucharistic Adoration and Daily Prayer

Council asks those of us who participate in Eucharistic Adoration – and the rest of our fraternity - to remember the following intentions every day when you pray:

1. **The spiritual protection of our fraternity and of all our members.**
2. **Those in our fraternity who are sick, and their families.**
3. **For the spiritual and physical health and protection of Pope Leo XIV.**
4. **Our bishops and their intentions: Bishop David Bonnar, Bishop Robert Pipta, Bishop Earl Fernandes, and Bishop Edward Malesic, JCL.**
5. **The Friars of the Immaculate Conception Province of the OFM, particularly Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM, Fr. Chris Gaffrey, OFM, Fr. Dennis Arambasick, OFM, and Fr. Patrick Boyle, OFM, who is the Provincial Minister.**
6. **Our beloved, hard-working pastors and parish priests, and our parishes, including Fr. Miron Kerul'-Kmec, Fr. Daniel Dozier, TOF, Fr. Ryan Furlong, TOF, and Fr. John Rickert, FSSP, TOF of Illinois, who is an Isolated Tertiary.**

7. **Fr. Gastor Temu Bahati, Fr. Matthew Munishi, Fr. Augustine N'Depatanisho and Frater Francis Tumaini** of the Diocese of Moshi.
8. **All the seminarians of St. Mary Seminary and Borromeo Seminary in Cleveland**, which serves the Youngstown and Cleveland Dioceses, as well as **the seminarians of SS. Cyril and Methodius Byzantine Seminary**, which serves the Eparchy of Parma. Our fraternity has spiritually adopted **Arthur Bodenschatz**, (St. Paul, North Canton) and **William Martzaklis** (St. Paul, North Canton) from the Diocese of Youngstown, **Joseph Rohan**, (St. Joseph Parish, Cuyahoga Falls), **Alex Krukemeyer**, (Our Lady of Victory Parish, Tallmadge), and **John Paul Antalek** (St. Mary Parish, Akron), all from the Diocese of Cleveland. These men and all seminarians are the future leaders and servants of our Church.
9. Please add prayers **for the safety and protection of our Ukrainian brothers and sisters, and for the conversion of Russia**. Also, **for the protection of Catholic priests, religious, and lay people everywhere, particularly in Nigeria, Peru, Nicaragua, the Middle East, the Far East, and other countries where our Faith is attacked**.
10. For the **protection of all life**, born and unborn, womb to tomb.
11. For the blessing of **an increase in priestly and religious vocations – including the Third Order Franciscans - and for an increase of faithful Catholic marriages and families**.
12. For the spiritual and physical health and protection of **Jakin Miller and all FOCUS missionaries**, who are working to keep the Faith among university students nationwide.



It is part of our holy Franciscan vocation to prayerfully support our fellow Franciscans, the Pope, our bishops, our priests, and seminarians and anyone in distress and danger. ***We have no Order without prayerful Franciscans, no priests without our seminarians, no Eucharist without our priests, and no Church without the Eucharist.*** We all work together doing the mission God has given us, for His glory. All these individuals on the list sacrifice daily for us, and it is our privilege to pray for them!



FRANCISCAN REMINDER

We begin our monthly gatherings with prayer inside the Church. As we pray Lectio Divina, we continue meditating on the Word of God as we return to our table. Please remember to keep **Holy Silence** during this transition until after sharing the word at your table.

Did You Know?

Our Holy Mother, the Church, provides many opportunities to acquire Indulgences. According to the Chapter 4 of the Statutes:

- 4.9 The 1972 Grant of Indulgences for the Third Order Secular of St Francis of Assisi provides that:
 - a. A plenary Indulgence is granted to members of the Third Order Secular of St Francis, provided they make or renew, at least privately, their promise of Profession, having dutifully fulfilled the usual conditions: confession, communion, and prayer to the intention of the Supreme Pontiff.
 - 1) **on the day of their admission (Investiture into the Novitiate) and of their Profession, and at the conclusion of an official visitation;**
 - 2) **on the feast-days of Blessed Luchesius, the first Tertiary (April 28); Saint Margaret of Cortona (May 16); Saint Clare of Assisi (August 11); Saint Louis, King of France (August 25); Saint Francis of Assisi (October 4); Saint Elizabeth of Hungary (November 17); all the Saints of the Three Orders of Saint Francis (November 29); and the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (December 8).**

b. Should any condition for the plenary indulgence be lacking, the indulgence will be only partial. However, the prescribed spiritual work, i.e. renewal of Profession as specified, is to be fulfilled to gain the partial indulgence. (Norm 20 § 4)

4.10 Although not part of the specific indulgences granted to the Third Order, per se, it is worth noting here that the so-called **“Portiuncula Indulgence” on August 2** was specifically retained for the benefit of all the faithful as part of the stipulations in Norm 15 of the apostolic constitution.

Lord, it is Good for Us to be Together!

Our much-anticipated annual Day of Recollection took place on Saturday, November 8, 2025 at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted in Youngstown. This also served as our November Gathering.

We began our day at 9 AM with a warm welcome from Kara Sertick, TOF, the Minister of St. Padre Pio Fraternity, who were our generous and hospitable hosts. This was followed by a beautiful Mass of Holy Profession, Investiture and Entrance to the Novitiate, presided by Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM, and Fr. Christopher Gaffrey, OFM.



Andrea Ferraro, Jack Kellogg, John Wilson, and Jerry Johnson joyfully Professed together, receiving their Tau crosses and cords. Several members of the St. Padre Pio fraternity entered the Novitiate as well. And we all were especially delighted to welcome our lovely Teresa Ventosa, who was Invested in our fraternity! At the end of Mass, we all renewed our Profession.



After Mass, we went down to the Hall for a breakfast snack and an excellent talk from Fr. Gaffrey on the Prodigal Son and our mission in the world as Franciscans. “Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened.” Repent and believe! Experience the goodness of God and ask for healing at every Mass.



We had the privilege of Adoration and Confession in the church at 11 AM.

At noon, we enjoyed a delicious lunch, courtesy of St. Padre Pio Fraternity – chicken, salad, green beans, pasta, and much more.



After lunch, we prayed the Liturgy of the Hours, led by Kenny Green, TOF.

The Memorial for the deceased Third Order Franciscan members followed, led

by Roberto Meza, TOF.

Fr. Vit then led us in a second Formation session and answered questions to clarify.

The day concluded with a closing prayer led by Paul Fedeles, TOF, Minister of Our Lady of America Fraternity in Ashtabula.

***We thank God for His many blessings to
our Third Order Franciscan family!!!***



***Our December Gathering will be our Christmas Party and will take place on Sunday, December 21 at
1:30 PM at St. Nicholas Byzantine Parish – please be sure to come!!!***

Save the Date (December, the Month of the Nativity of Our Lord)

December 8	Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Patroness of the United States of America (Holy Day of Obligation) Anniversary of the Establishment of the Third Order Franciscans, under the leadership and guidance of the Order of Friars Minor, Immaculate Conception Province
December 12	Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of North and South America
December 21	December Gathering, St. Nicholas Byzantine Parish, 1:30 PM
December 25	Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord (Holy Day of Obligation)
January 1	Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (Holy Day of Obligation)



We live in a world where religion is too often used to justify wars and atrocities.

"Whoever does not love does not know God," (1 John 4:8). Therefore, we want to walk together by appreciating what unites us, breaking down the walls of prejudice and mistrust, promoting mutual knowledge and esteem in order to give to all a strong message of hope and an invitation to become peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). Make these values our resolutions for the season of Advent and even more so for our personal and communal life.

Pope Leo XIV (born 1955) – Augustinian Priest & Missionary, Doctor of Canon Law, High School Math Teacher, Parish Pastor, Diocesan Official, Seminary Teacher, Seminary Administrator, Prior General of the Augustinians, Bishop of Chiclayo, Peru, Prefect for the Dicastery of Bishops, President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, Fluent in English, Spanish, Italian, French, & Portuguese, speaks a little German, & reads Latin. Servant of the Servants of God