



Soldiers of Christ

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

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Sandy Baden, TOF, Editor

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THE SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST DECEMBER 25, 2025 THOSE WHO LOVED BABY JESUS



In this beautiful painting we see Mary looking at St. Francis holding baby Jesus, and it appears St. Joseph is about to fall asleep. St. Francis had a great love for Baby Jesus as depicted here. His love for Baby Jesus was embodied in the human nature of Jesus and the divine, while holding Him in his arms. St. Francis loved Bethlehem and Calvary, both were his passion.

St. Francis had created the first living Nativity scene in Greccio, Italy, in 1223. His “living crib” which had included live animals, a manger, Mary, Joseph, the Shepherds and Baby Jesus. This began the tradition of the Nativity scene. The “creche” is what we celebrate today throughout the world.

St. Francis’ inspiration for the creche came to him in his travels to the Holy Land in 1219-1220. He wanted everyone to experience the same love for baby Jesus as he had visited the holy sites of Christ’s birth.



*This picture is of **Pope Francis** when he visited the place St. Francis had created the first Nativity scene outside of Greccio, Italy, December 1, 2019.*

This is also the site where miraculous healings took place. Pope Francis signs an apostolic letter outside of Greccio, Italy, on December 1, 2019.



*Let us remember during our Christmas festivities we do not forget God gave us His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior. As St. Francis said, **“Baby Jesus was a symbol of God’s profound humility, poverty, and love for humanity...the Nativity Scene was a way to feel and touch this poverty.”***

St. Padre Pio** also had a great love for Baby Jesus. He had said, **“Easter is certainly the most important feast of the year. But I like Christmas better, because at Easter Jesus is crucified and this makes me suffer, whereas at Christmas the Baby Jesus is so sweet.”



Even as a child Padre Pio had a devotion for Baby Jesus at Christmas. He was known to prepare a crib and would start in October. He would create small statues of shepherds, sheep, and the magi, after finding clay to shape them.

Celebrating Midnight Mass was with particular joy. He was also seen holding the Baby Jesus alive in his arms. These amazing supernatural events were given by God for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ to be seen, especially at Christmas.



Mother Angelica, founder of EWTN (Eternal Word Television Network). **“Mother Angelica stood praying at the side of the statue when suddenly the miraculous image came alive and turned towards her. “Build Me a Temple and I will help those who help you.”** Mother Angelica built the **Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament** in honor of the Divine Child Jesus.

Mother Angelica loved the Child Jesus. The nuns that knew her said, **“she would frequently see and talk with the Divine Child Jesus in the hallways and in her cell.”** She loved the Baby Jesus as well as St. Francis of Assisi and St. Padre Pio.



Rita Rizzo, born April 20, 1923 over 100 years ago, also known as Mother Angelica, became ill with a stomach ailment at the age of 18. Her mother took her to the home of Rhoda Wise who had a reputation as a healer. Rhoda suggested Rita pray a novena to St. Theresa, which she did, and was healed overnight.

Rhoda Wise had received visits from our Lord in her home. Many healings and were reported for those who came to the Rhoda Wise house, with up 300-500 people a week. Rita had spent a few years volunteering the home of Rhoda Wise and learned much from her. Rhoda Wise’s cause for sainthood has been opened. She is currently a Servant of God.

This picture is the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament of Our Lady of the Angels Monastery in Hanceville, Alabama.

Mother Angelica died on Easter Sunday, March 27, 2016 at the age of 92.

Sandy Baden, TOF



THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2025**



The celebration of the **Feast of the Holy Family** in the Catholic Church is always on the Sunday after Christmas. The connection is with Christmas and the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The **Feast of the Holy Family** began in Canada and became a feast in the entire Church in 1920, and spread throughout the world. Pope Leo XIII instituted the Feast of the Holy Family as a liturgical celebration, and, in 1921, Pope Benedict XV added the Feast to the universal Church calendar.

Mary, the Mother of God, St. Joseph, the Protector of the family through the divine will of God, and Baby Jesus born as the Son of the Father. After the birth of Jesus the Holy family had fled to Egypt and lived their lives as an ordinary family in Nazareth. We can only imagine the life they must have had as Joseph made his living as a carpenter.

It is said that the Holy Family was a “true model of life” for Christian families. In reality, Mary, who was free of original sin, Jesus the Son of the Father, and Joseph considered to be a “Just Man,” it would seem to be a hard model to follow. Their lives were filled with “Love,” love of God and each other, obedience to God, and practiced every virtue with perfection in their prayer to God. When we look to the “Holy Family,” we should, in our faith, live our lives in love and obedience to God and receive inspiration from the Feast of the Holy Family.

Sandy Baden, TOF



St. Padre Pio spoke of the Holy Family as the “model for all Christian families, encouraging people to follow their example of poverty, labor and love.”

ENTRANCE INTO THE NOVITATE
Allison Miller



*“Congratulations,” to **Allison Miller**, for her entrance into the Novitiate. Allison celebrated the Ritual of Entrance into the Novitiate on November 8, 2025 at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted with Fr. Vit as celebrant.*

OFM Province of the Immaculate Conception Anniversary
A New Community of Isolated Tertiaries

On December 8, 2019, The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM, approved the establishment of the new community of Franciscan Tertiaries under the care of the OFM of the Province of the Immaculate Conception. The Isolated Tertiaries were also formed with the first Formation meeting on April 29, 2021. Please pray especially on our Anniversary, December 8th, for our Community of Franciscan Tertiaries and Members of the Isolated Tertiaries Community.

JANUARY ZOOM GATHERING

January 1, 2026

*Our **January** Zoom Gathering will be **Cancelled** due to January 1, 2026 is the Solemnity of Mother Mary, Mother of God.*

VIRTUAL MONTHLY GATHERING, DECEMBER 4, 2025

MARY COLON, TOF, was professed on March 22, 2025 at our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted Shrine with Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM as celebrant.

Mary will introduce the Consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary and Fraternity Consecration. They can be found under the exercises of religion, by Ericka Witover, TOF.



Elizabeth Lemire, TOF, celebrated her Investiture Ceremony at the Shrine of our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted with Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM, as celebrant on August 24, 2025

Elizabeth will present the topic of The Christmas Crib.





"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

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
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. Pray also on our Anniversary of Franciscan Tertiaries. 7***

ADMONITION XVI

Purity of Heart

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



“Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God,” (Mt. 5:8). A man is really clean of heart when he has no time for the things of this world, but is always searching for the things of heaven, never failing to keep God before his eyes and always adoring him with a pure heart and soul.

Lothar Hardick, OFM mentions in the second paragraph of this Admonition the prayer, St. Francis often used, **“My God and my all.”** This clearly reminds us of the first commandment from God: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” We should always be looking towards heaven in all that we do as this commandment tells us.

This sounds clear, precise, and gives us an unambiguous objective that we should reach towards perfection as an Isolated Tertiary. However, how easy is this to achieve in our lives today?

Everything seems to be upside down and chaos seems to be all around us that distracts our hearts and minds from God. In our weakness we tend to go our own way, (ego), in our thoughts and what we do. Remembering a comment from Fr. Vit at one of our Zoom gather meetings when he mentioned, “the closer we come to God we eventually will forget the things of this world and want to be alone with God in prayer.” Did not John the Baptist live in the desert and Jesus also went into the desert to pray? Makes me wonder if Jesus had visited John the Baptist during those times in the desert.

Everyone should have a place where we can be alone in prayer in our homes. An office, a special prayer room, or in the yard. Prayer keeps us

in tune with God. Taking the time out of the day, in the morning and in the evening are most important. Praying the hours in obedience to our Rule or the “Little Office of Mary.” We can create our own desert, so to speak.

*St. Padre Pio had said, **“a clean heart is a heart cleansed of impure thoughts through a consistent spiritual life of daily prayer, weekly confession, daily communion, spiritual reading, and a nightly examination of conscience.”***



*He also said, **“The practice of these spiritual disciplines helps a person put God first in all thoughts, words, and actions, leading to a pure heart.”***

As we read in this Admonition, Lothar Hardick, OFM, reiterates all the sins we could commit to keep us from obtaining a clean heart in trying to reach purity in heart and soul. As Tertiaries we observe our Rule of 1883 and follow its Constitutions as our guide toward perfection and our life in the Church with the Sacraments given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

*In Matthew 5:8, **Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”** How do we find God in our daily lives? We are truly blessed when we see God working in our lives and give God the credit for the blessings given. We can see how things had worked out or another door was opened that seemed to be previously closed.*

We may live in this world, but our hearts and minds must always be reaching towards heaven, in our prayer, in our family, in our work, in our recreation, and most of all give thanks to Lord Jesus Christ.



“Blessed that religious who finds all his joy and happiness in the words and deeds of our Lord.”

(St. Francis of Assisi)

Save the Date

DECEMBER 4: IT ZOOM GATHERING: 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 4:00 PM Pacific Time. Discussion Topic to be presented by Elizabeth Lemire, TOF, The Christmas Crib.

DECEMBER 8: SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
*** (Day of Fasting) ***

**ANNIVERSARY OF THE FRANCISCAN TERTIARY
COMMUNITY**

DECEMBER 11: IT NOVITIATE FORMATION GROUP 4: 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 4:00 PM Pacific Time.

DECEMBER 18: IT NOVITIATE FORMATION GROUP 5: 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 4:00 PM Pacific Time.

**DECEMBER 25: THE SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
JESUS CHRIST (Merry Christmas)**

DECEMBER 28: THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH

JANUARY 1: IT ZOOM GATHERING HAS BEEN CANCELLED
due to the Solemnity of the Mother Mary, Mother of God.



