



Soldiers of Christ

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

January 2026

Sandy Baden, TOF, Editor

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MARY, MOTHER OF GOD SOLEMNITY OF MARY, FEAST DAY, JANUARY 1



Each year on January 1st we celebrate the Solemnity of Mary, The Mother of God. The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes Mary—Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church: 963: *The Virgin Mary... is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and of the redeemer... She is 'clearly the mother of the members of Christ'... since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the Church, who are members of its head.*

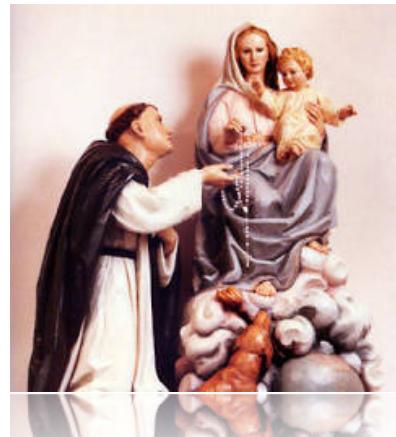
“Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church.”

To describe Mary as the Mother of God would be to use the term Theotokas. Theotokas implies that Mary carried God in her womb and gave birth to Him. She was the “God-bearer” and carried the divine person of God in order that He could take on His human nature. Jesus was fully divine in nature and fully human in nature. You could also say Mary was the first tabernacle for Jesus or that she “bore God.” “Mother of God” does not mean Mary was from eternity, it is (Theotokas).

The title “Mother of God” (Theotokos) was confirmed by the First Council of Ephesus in 431. Our individual devotion to Mary, along with the Church, gives credence to her words to Elizabeth in the Magnificent, “all generations will call me blessed.” We honor Mary in the Marian prayer of the Rosary, which gives us her Son, Jesus, in the Gospel as we pray.

The Rosary was given to St. Dominic, the founder of the Dominican Order, according to Tradition, from the Blessed Mother when she had appeared to him as he prayed in the forest. He prayed for three days continually, and with complete fatigue he had fallen into a coma.

*Our Lady appeared to him with three angels and said, **Dear Dominic, do you know which weapon the Blessed Trinity wants to use to reform the world?** “Oh, my Lady,” answered St. Dominic, “you know far better than I do, because next to your Son Jesus Christ, you have always been the chief instrument of our salvation.” Mary answers, **“St. Dominic, I want you to know that, in this kind of warfare, the principal weapon has always been the Angelic Psalter, which is the foundation-stone of the New Testament. Therefore, if you want to reach these hardened souls and win them over to God, preach my Psalter.”** (Taken from the book, Secret of the Rosary by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort.)*



Mary the Mother of God (Theotokas), is our heavenly mother too. She brings us closer to her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Especially by praying the Holy Rosary we pray with Mary on the way to her Son in His cross and resurrection.



The Holy Mother of God is the new Eve and Mother of the Church. Mary awaits us in heaven as we pray: “To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve, to thee we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.”

The Mother of God will lead us to Jesus as our advocate, and a path to holiness. Let us honor Mary, The Mother of God on her Feast day January 1, and pray: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, AMEN.

Sandy Baden, TOF

THE SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD FEAST DAY, January 4, 2026

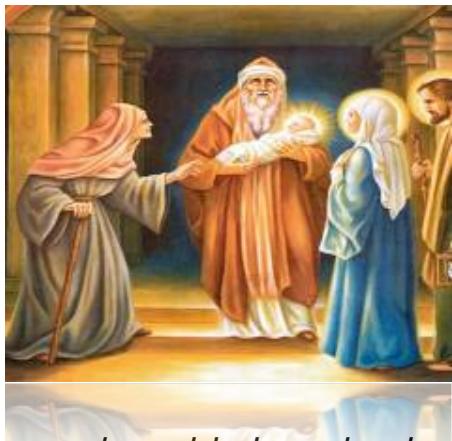


*In the article of January 2024, we reiterated the feast of “**The Epiphany of the Lord**” celebrating Christ’s manifestation into the world. His manifestation was through the visit of the Magi, which also included His baptism at the Jordan river with John the Baptist, and the Wedding at Cana.*

*It was stated the visit of the Magi, (Mt. 2: 1-12), “**was the Epiphany of an affirmation of universal salvation.**” The Baptism of the Lord,*

*(Mk 1: 9-11), when the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and the voice of God was heard, “**This is my beloved Son.**” The miracle at the Wedding of Cana when Jesus turned the water into wine at the request of the Blessed Virgin Mary. These were considered the three examples of Christ’s most important events in the life of Christ.*

*What about, **The Presentation of the Lord, The Ascension of the Lord, or The Transfiguration of the Lord?***

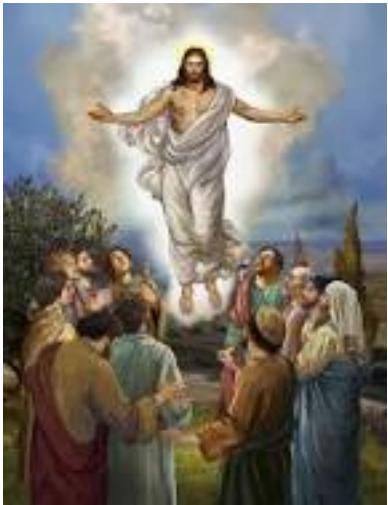


In the Presentation of the Lord, Jesus submits Himself to the custom of the first born male child to be presented to the Temple, and second, the Blessed Virgin Mary submitting herself to purification after childbirth, according to the law of Moses.

Most importantly, Simeon’s future prophecy to the Blessed Virgin Mary, that a

sword would pierce her heart, (Luke 2:35). Mary would suffer along with Christ during His passion and death on the Cross, some years later.



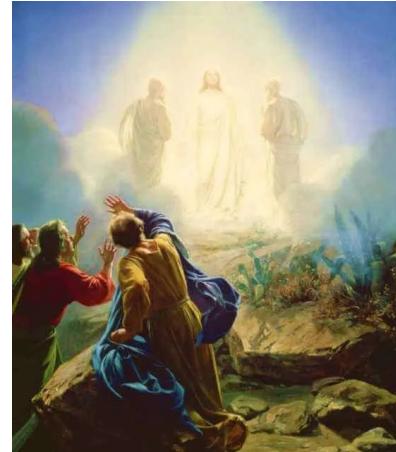


The manifestation of Jesus and His Ascension into heaven, 40 days after His resurrection, must have been amazing and astonishing to the Apostles and disciples of Jesus. Witnessed by them, filled with emotion of joy and sadness, as He was leaving them again after His death on the cross.

*Jesus was lifted up by His own accord, and a cloud covered Him as He disappeared into heaven. Now, they were to wait for the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete. **“And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.”*** (John 14:16)

*The Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ reveals His divine nature to the three Apostles as He had brought them to the high mountain of Mt. Tabor. God speaks again revealing Jesus, in His glorified body, as His Son, **“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased, listen to Him.”*** (Mt. 17:5)

Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah, while Jesus is transfigured, with His face “shone like the sun, and His garments became glistening white,” as the three Apostles were in awe. (Mt. 17:2)



Just these three additional manifestations of Jesus tells us the importance of Christ’s time on earth. The Gospel shows the world the love God has for us by giving us His Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. The entire Gospel is an “Epiphany of the Lord.”

The Padre Pio Foundation states: “Padre Pio viewed the Epiphany as Christ’s manifestation to all nations and a powerful invitation to actively seek, recognize, and live out Christ’s light in the world.”

Sandy Baden, TOF

THE FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

JANUARY 11, 2026



The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord reminds us the Christmas season has come to an end and we begin Ordinary Time the day after this feast.

John the Baptist, the Precursor of our Lord, declares as Jesus approaches the Jordan River, “Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who takes away the sin of the world,” (Jn. 1:29).

John knew Him as he stated in (Jn. 1:32), “I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from the sky and remain upon Him,” and continues in (Jn. 1:34) “Now I have seen and testified that He is the Son of God.” From the Jordan River to the beginning of Christ’s ministry on earth, the Passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus into heaven, culminates at the Jordan River with John the Baptist.

The Lamb of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, asks John the Baptist to baptize Him in the Jordan River. To the astonishment of John the Baptist he says, “I need to be baptized by You, and yet You are coming to me?”

(Mt. 3:13-17). John baptizes Jesus and the heavens were opened as the dove from the sky appears and the voice of God says: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Mt. 3:13-17). It is God Himself who tells us who Jesus is at that moment. A profound declaration by God to send his Son to save us from our sins. Do we need more proof of how much God loves us?

We do not hear of God speaking from the sky today, but it is through our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that He speaks in the Gospel. The Trinity is revealed at the Baptism of our Lord, the Father, as a voice from Heaven, the Son, Who is Baptized by John the Baptist, and the Holy Spirit, Who appears as a dove from the sky and rests over the head of Jesus.

On this Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, let us be thankful to God for our Lord Jesus Christ who came into the world to save us from our sins, and gave us Confession in His mercy and love for us.

Sandy Baden, TOF

ENTRANCE INTO THE NOVITIATE



*Congratulations to **Lisa Maurine Bute**, for her entrance into the Novitiate. Lisa celebrated the Ritual of Entrance into the Novitiate on December 8, 2025 at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church with Monsignor Thomas E. Cook.*

Lisa's Patron Saint is: St. Bonaventure

*Congratulations to **Patricia Schauble**, for her entrance into the Novitiate. Patricia celebrated the Ritual of Entrance into the Novitiate on December 11, 2025 at the Most Precious Blood of Jesus with Fr. Joseph Tuscan, OFM, Cap.*

Patricia's Patron Saint is: St. Joan of Arc



TOF COMMUNITY PRAYER CHAIN

Submitted by Pepe Ventosa, TOF

*We will be joining the prayer chain requests from each fraternity and Isolated members so that all Tertiaries can join in intercessory prayer with each other. This prayer chain will be referred to as the “**TOF Community***

Prayer Chain.” The procedure for sending a prayer request will stay the same: Just send your prayer request to the prayer chain leader for Isolated Tertiaries (Frank F). He will forward your request to the other chain leaders.



Please remember that each prayer request contains private and personal information, where a member requests our community to pray for them. As such, do not forward this prayer request to anyone or any other prayer chain outside of our TOF community.

Deus Meus et Omnia - My God and My all” - St. Francis of Assisi



It was stated, “St. Francis emphasized prayer for others as a way to be and instrument of God’s peace, actively sowing love, pardon and understanding, not just seeking consolation for oneself, recognizing that in giving, we receive.”

“St. Francis of Assisi emphasized prayer for the sick as a way to bring God’s healing presence. Prayers in his name ask for healing for various ailments (blindness, deafness, weakness) and for caregivers, acknowledging Christ’s healing touch on earth.”

Wikipedia



“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.

ADMONITION XVII

The Faithful Steward

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



“Blessed is that servant (Mt. 24:26) who takes no more pride in the good that God says and does through him than in that which he says and does through someone else. It is wrong for anyone to be anxious to receive more from his neighbor than he himself is willing to give God.

This Admonition opens our eyes to true humility in observing the “will of God” in our lives. Lothar Hardick, OFM explains how we should not miss the message from the heart of St. Francis, to indicate we are “Servants of God” in all that we do with the gifts that our Lord has given to each of us. We should acknowledge that Christ has blessed us and give thanks for use of these gifts for His glory and His alone.

How easy it is to forget this message that we are to give God thanks and glory for all that we have in this world. We try so hard when we are at work to do the best we can and seem to expect praise from our neighbor, but we should be thanking God for a job well done and give the glory to Him for what was accomplished. We are stewards of all that has been obtained from our Lord. Even in reading what is written here comes from the Spirit of God in its typing and not knowing what the next paragraph will read. So, I thank God and give Him the glory for these two paragraphs from Him so far.

Lothar Hardick, OFM also talks about “God, the Lord of Creation,” and implies that we take for granted that “creation” does not include ourselves. How can this be? Look at the baby in the womb and after it is born. Life is so precious when picturing the mother first holding her new born child. Especially today for those who do not respect life, which God created, and babies are aborted for the convenience of the person who has lost sight of what God has given, and is blinded to the love of our Lord Jesus Christ. May we keep the unborn in our most sacred prayers.



An artist can admire a beautiful scene of the mountains, lake, or the ocean in God's creation, and then desire to paint it. The beauty placed there remains constant on the canvas, and does not change with the time of the season. It is there for those to see how God inspired the beauty seen before the artist.

Sometimes in the creative mind of an artist, with a whim of a brush, can change something of the scene and make it astonishingly more beautiful than what had originally appeared. Is that not inspired by God at that very moment?

Should the painting then be hidden in a closet? This is what God had inspired and, therefore, the world should see it. This is when we thank God for the gift and glorify our Lord in His wisdom.

Our achievements are God's achievements. If we do not see this or understand that everything comes from God, pray for guidance. Imagine not being thanked for a job well done, or if you are thanked for a job well done we should realize the credit should be given to God and thank Him in our prayer.

Knowing God is the Creator, our Lord Jesus Christ is the Son, and the Holy Spirit is the One who inspires, we are blessed by the Trinity for the gift, and then thank God. When you are thanked for a job well done it warms our hearts that someone thought so much of us to take the time and effort to give us a "thank you." Let us never lose sight of how much our Lord Jesus Christ loves to hear from us in our prayer and we should always thank Him for guiding our way. Also remember in the "Canticle of Mary," "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for He has looked with favor on His lowly servant."



Save the Date

JANUARY 1: The IT Zoom Gathering has been **CANCELLED because of the New Year 2026 holiday, and the **SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD****

JANUARY 4: THE SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

JANUARY 8: IT NOVITIATE FORMATION GROUP 4: 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 4:00 PM Pacific Time

JANUARY 11: THE FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

JANUARY 15: IT NOVITIATE FORMATION GROUP 5: 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 4:00 PM Pacific Time

