

The Troubadour

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



Ecce Mater Tua

Our Seraphic Father, **St. Francis of Assisi**, demonstrated a profound love for the Theotokos, Mother of God. He referred to her as the advocate, queen, and the exemplar of what it means to be a disciple. Central to the spirituality of being a Franciscan is humility. What better example than Mary, who upon Gabriel's annunciation responded with her *Fiat: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word* (Luke 1:38).

Mary, the Mother of God, always points us to Jesus: *His mother saith to the waiters: Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye* (John 2:5). Mary's will is perfectly conformed to the will of God (St. Louis De Montfort): *And Mary said: My soul doth magnify the Lord* (Luke 1:46). As such, Father Francis saw Mary as the perfect example of discipleship and humility, centered in Christ. In one of many ways, Father Francis honored Mary; he composed what is regarded as his most famous salutation to her, **The Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary**:

“Hail, holy Lady, most holy Queen, Mary, Mother of God, ever Virgin. You were chosen by the Most High Father in heaven, consecrated by Him with His most Holy Beloved Son and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.

On you descended and still remains all the fullness of grace and every good. Hail, His Palace! Hail, His Tabernacle! Hail, His Dwelling! Hail, His Robe! Hail, His Handmaid! Hail, His Mother!

And hail all you holy virtues which, through the grace and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, are poured into the hearts of the faithful so that from being unfaithful they may become faithful to God”.

Our Lady of Angels, pray for us.

Spiritual Director

Fr. Vit Fiala, OFM
Shrine of
Our Lady Comforter
of the Afflicted
Youngstown



Editor
Luis Guzman, TOF

Franciscan Quote for Spring 2026

Canticle of the Creatures 1225 (5) “Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful”.

Franciscan Scapular Medals

Franciscan scapular medals are now available for purchase online. To order please visit the Patron Saint Medals website at www.patronsaintmedals.com and then search for "Franciscan scapular medal." These are sterling silver scapular medals. We will be ordering pewter scapular medals that will be available in the near future at the Shrine for a lower cost.

Supplement to The New Catechism of Third Order - Virgildee Daniel, TOF

Now available for use both as on-going formation for those already professed, as well as for use by those in initial formation, this volume of supplemental materials fills a much-needed gap in the published books by the Franciscan Tertiaries of the OFM Province of the Immaculate Conception. As its title suggests, one needs also to have a copy of The New Catechism of the Third Order, 1972 (3rd edition), Marion A. Habig, ofm – or NCTO. The NCTO was our first reprint of “classic” Third Order books for our members’ study and reference. Those who professed before our current body of initial formation materials became available will now have access to important materials from the initial formation curriculum, something they will not have previously experienced. Those in initial formation will be utilizing this supplement whenever their readings include Lessons from the NCTO. The final text emerged after the 2025 annual Formators Meeting. It was observed that those who have professed since we started using the new formation materials “know more about the Third Order than those of us who are already professed from before.” The intention, therefore, is to close that knowledge gap between “newly professed” and “already professed” as the first priority. On the other hand, it is also now part of the initial formation curriculum for those sessions based upon the NCTO itself.

There are three sections to these supplemental materials:

- The Rule of 1883 of Pope Leo XIII in an easily accessed format.
- Explanatory notes for each of the 24 Lessons of the NCTO itself. Much has happened in the Church’s official documents over the past half-century since 1972, especially a new Code of Canon Law (1983) and the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) in 1992, as well as revisions in Church Liturgical Law, especially the Liturgy of the Hours. These notes, some simple and others more detailed, are meant to update and amend Fr. Habig’s excellent work for this evolution of Church teaching, things that Fr. Habig could not have anticipated as he wrote.
- A series of appendices providing important on-going formation not part of the NCTO commentary. These are generally taken from materials used in initial formation, although they have been “tweaked” from what is in the formation manuals, especially the one discussing indulgences.
- The appendix on the CCC is entirely new and includes the one – and only one – change to the CCC, promulgated by Pope Francis in 2018. This way our members do not need to purchase the revised 2nd edition of the CCC just for the new Paragraph 2267. The full text is given here, along with a summary of the promulgating document.
- A glossary of term from the Liturgy of the Hours. This also entirely new and is not in our current initial formation materials.

Members interested in obtaining the Supplemental Materials for Study & Clarification should contact their respective Master of Formation for ordering. A group savings on shipping and handling is beneficial. Individual copies are less than \$10, but will cost an additional \$7 in shipping if only one copy is ordered.

Blessed be God in His Angels and His Saints - Virgildee Daniel, TOF

Most of you have likely heard Protestant objections that “Catholics worship Mary, and not God.” Or that “Catholics commit idolatry – look at all their statues and how they pray to them.” Given the sometimes imprecise manner in which we utilize synonyms in English, it is not surprising the some might conflate reverence and honor with worship, as such.

Sometimes even Catholics may give that impression by their pious exuberance in devotions to the Blessed Mother and other saints, at least to outside observers. Latin and Greek, on the other hand, are much more precise in word usage.

Remember that all official Church documents begin in Latin and then enter into local translation. So, let’s set the record straight, shall we?

In Latin, “worship” is clearly defined by *latría*. Webster’s defines “latría” as the “supreme homage that is given to God alone.” That is what Catholic theology means when it asks us to worship – and it doesn’t broach any ambiguity when translated into English. But, right away you might ask “isn’t that the same as adoration.” Sort of, but not quite. The Latin, *adōrāre*, means rather “to plead with, appeal to, approach (a god) as a suppliant, or worshipper.” However, it can also mean “to treat with reverence, to admire,” which gives rise to the confusion when the Latin is translated into English. For certainly it is appropriate for lovers to use “adore” in terms of their response to one another. But, don’t we often casually say “Oh, I just adore this or that”? Like a new fashion or an excellently prepared food. Really? Well, thanks modern English, for you. On the other hand, we lovers of Christ most certainly adore Him as our beloved.

Before moving on, let me also clarify about reverence to statues and icons as objects of pious devotion. To answer charges of “idolatry” in the days of the Iconoclast Heresy, St John of Damascus taught most clearly – “I do not worship matter; I worship the Creator of matter.” His teaching is foundational to our approach to statues, icons, relics and other material objects of devotion. However, as noted earlier, to the outside observer this might get lost in translation without further explanation.

Now to how we approach “angels and saints.” The operative word here is *dulla*, a Greek word borrowed into Latin usage without change. Again, Webster: “veneration as respect paid to saints and angels as servants and friends of God.” The original Greek likely meant “slavery” as from *doulos*/slave. Thus, we are offering *dulla* when we have recourse to the angels and saints, not *latría*, or even “*adōrāre*,” although we can certainly approach the saints, and especially the Blessed Mother, “with reverence and admiration.” See how we can get confused in English? So, is that it? No. We need to clarify with prefixes several layers of intensity when we offer *dulla*. First is *proto-dulla*, as in “first or primary.” To whom is this addressed? St Joseph, spouse and “protector of the Virgin Mary” and “guardian of the Redeemer.” We often reverently pray:

*To you God entrusted His only Son.
In you Mary placed her trust.
With you Christ became man.*

No other human in history had this close and privileged relationship with Our Lord and His Mother, in time or in eternity. This is why he is taken as the Patron of the Church. (Pius IX declared him both patron and protector of the Church.) And, for Mary herself? The term is *hyper-dulla*, as in “above, excessive, super.” And why not? Is she not “More honorable than the cherubim and more glorious than the seraphim.” Indeed, for as a “virgin” she gave “birth to God, the Word.” That special role in God’s plan and in our salvation is truly worthy of being the sole object of *hyper-dulla* – “You truly the Theotokos (the God-Bearer), we magnify.”

Indeed, the oldest known prayer to the Virgin dates from the 2nd century, if not earlier. In modern translation, it reads:

*Beneath your protection we take refuge, O, Virgin Theotokos.
Despise not our prayers in our need, but deliver us from danger;
for you alone are pure and blessed.*

I hope this provides some helpful clarification on these important matters.
Peace & All Good!

News from Our Lady of America Fraternity

No news from Our Lady of America Fraternity!

News from SS. Francis & Clare Fraternity – Debbie and Roberto

On February 15, the Fraternity gathered for a joyful, baby-shower-style celebration that highlighted our commitment to supporting life and families in need. The event featured a special presentation by Peggy Swrydenko of Embrace in Barberton, who shared moving and inspiring stories about the mission and impact of their organization.

Peggy explained that Embrace continues to grow each year, and in 2025 alone the ministry served more than 900 families. Their work focuses on empowering parents to choose life and helping them become the best parents they can be. Embrace supports families in very practical ways by providing material assistance as well as free pregnancy testing, ultrasounds, and STI testing. Beyond these services, the organization offers compassionate guidance and encouragement to those facing difficult decisions.

She also shared that Embrace is currently seeking volunteers and counselors to accompany and support their clients. Peggy expressed heartfelt gratitude to our fraternity for the generous donations of baby items and financial contributions collected during the celebration.

In another event on February 28, Pepe Ventosa, TOF, and John Wilson, TOF, attended the Columbus Conference of Catholic Men. They represented our Fraternity while participating in a day of faith, fellowship, and inspiration. Serving as exhibitors, they hosted a table featuring the TOF banner and informational brochures that introduced attendees to the Third Order Franciscans and the spirit of our vocation. - **Roberto Meza, TOF**

At our March gathering, we had 4 Inquirers that were welcomed into the Postulancy phase of Initial Formation.

Please pray for Connie, Gary, Donna, and Pam as they learn the Franciscan Way of life. - **Debbie Ventosa, TOF**

News from St. Padre Pio Fraternity

No news from St. Padre Pio Fraternity!

News from Isolated Tertiaries - Pepe Ventosa, TOF

The Isolated Tertiaries continue to meet via zoom for their monthly gatherings. Group #4 just completed their Novitiate period and will be celebrating their Profession into the Third Order of St. Francis soon. Group #5 of Initial Formation is currently in their novitiate phase. Please continue to pray for them as they discern the call to the TOF. We are planning to start with Group #6 on April 9th. Currently we have 8 confirmed new Inquirers starting in this group. They are from OH, PA, WV, IN, Germany, Tel Aviv, and Australia. Please keep this group in your prayers too.

On a side note, several Isolated Tertiary women are looking forward to meeting their TOF sisters in fraternity at the newly established TOF Women Prayer Group, "Mondays with Mary."

Annual Tridua - Pepe Ventosa, TOF

Our 3rd Annual Tridua Retreat will take place on August 21-23, 2026 at the Shrine of Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted in Youngstown, OH. Our constitutions (article 66) recommend an annual retreat of a Franciscan nature. This is the only retreat that our community offers as of now, along with the annual Day of Recollection which takes place on the 2nd Saturday in November.

More information to follow. Please plan to join us!!!

ANNUAL TOF PILGRIMAGE



The St. Pio TOF Fraternity will be sponsoring our next annual pilgrimage which will take place on May 16, 2026. We will be visiting the Basilica and National Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon in North Jackson, OH. We will start the day with lunch at 1:00 PM on site and will end at 6:00 PM after Mass. Confession will be available before Mass.

More details to follow

Save the date!!!

ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE

SATURDAY, MAY 16, 2026

OUR LADY OF LEBANON
2795 N. Lipkey Road, North Jackson, Ohio 44451



1:00 PM / **LUNCH**

\$20 (INCLUDES TIP)

PASTA, MEATBALLS, GREEN BEANS, POTATOES,
SALAD, ROLLS, DESSERT, COFFEE, WATER.

2:00 PM / **PRESENTATION**

BY CHORBISHOP ANTHONY SPINOSA

FOLLOWED BY AN OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT
THE CHAPEL, GIFT SHOP, AND WALK THE
BEAUTIFUL GROUNDS.

4:30 PM / **CONFESSION**

5:00 PM / **MASS**

IF NECESSARY: CONTACT KARA SERTICK, TOF
AT 330-501-7853

A FREE-WILL OFFERING WILL BE TAKEN
FOR THE CHORBISHOP AND THE SHRINE

New Appointment - Pepe Ventosa, TOF

John Wilson, TOF, has graciously accepted his appointment to help me in assisting Fr. Vit with the endeavors of our community of Tertiaries. John is a member of the SS Francis and Clare Fraternity and was just professed in November 2025. He, as all of us, whether professed a month ago or years ago, is learning to incorporate the spirit of our Seraphic Father in his new life as Franciscan. At this time he has been studying and collecting documents tracing back to the development of our community. Many of you may have met John as he assisted with the Tridua retreats.

We are grateful for his generosity in giving of his time and talents and I look forward to working side by side with him.

Profession of St. Francis - Pepe Ventosa, TOF

On April 16th, the anniversary of St. Francis' profession, our Constitution urges us to make a renewal of our profession. Article 29 of the Constitutions reads, "...the tertiary brothers and sisters – as persons who have embraced a constant way of life in the world – shall strive to strengthen themselves more and more in their holy resolution. Hence, they are urged to make a frequent renewal of their profession with devotion, at least privately; but to make it publicly on the anniversary of the profession of our holy Father Francis (April 16), and at the time of retreat."

The prayer of "Renewal of Profession" is a re-commitment of our promise to observe always, with God's grace, the commandments of God and the Rule of the Third Order. This renewal brings to mind St. Francis' words to his brothers as he was nearing death, "Let us begin again, for up until now we have done nothing." This prayer can be found on our website thirdorderfranciscans.com under the "Ritual Prayers" on the menu bar.

TOF Women Prayer Group - Pepe Ventosa, TOF

A women's prayer group, "Mondays with Mary," is being formed by Gina Love, TOF (St. Pio Fraternity) and Debbie Ventosa, TOF (SS. Francis and Clare Fraternity) and planned to launch on May 4, 2026. The group will meet via zoom weekly on Mondays Eastern time from 6:30 pm to 7:00 pm to pray the Rosary.

All female members (novices and professed) of the TOF community will receive the zoom invite and are welcome to attend. A journal will be kept for prayer requests. Any TOF members who may have a prayer request can contact Gina to have their request placed in the prayer journal. Please contact Pepe Ventosa, TOF, with any questions.



MONDAYS WITH MARY

Franciscan Tertiaries' Women Prayer Group

- Mondays 6:30 – 7:00 PM EST via Zoom
- Please contact Gina Love to place your prayer request in our prayer journal

Under the patronage of Our Blessed Mother

Octobri Mense - 1891
Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on the Rosary
(Excerpt)

“With equal truth may it be also affirmed that, by the will of God, Mary is the intermediary through whom is distributed unto us this immense treasure of mercies gathered by God, for mercy and truth were created by Jesus Christ. Thus as no man goeth to the Father but by the Son, so no man goeth to Christ but by His Mother”.



Save the Dates!

Easter Sunday	April 5th
Divine Mercy Sunday	April 12th
Profession of St. Francis/ Prayer of Renewal of Profession	April 16th
The Ascension of the Lord	May 14th
Annual Pilgrimage	May 16th
Pentecost	May 24th
The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ	June 7th
Annual Tridua Retreat	August 21st -23rd
First Sunday of Advent	November 29th

