



Soldiers of Christ

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

October 2026

Sandy Baden, TOF, Editor

Vol. 6, Issue 10

TRANSITUS OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI FEAST DAY: OCTOBER 3, 2026



Each year we celebrate the Transitus, the passing of St. Francis of Assisi from this life to death, or the passing over from this world to the next. One of the stories of St. Francis are taken from the book, "Little Flowers of St. Francis."

Brother Leo, who had not left St. Francis' side, as he laid in pain for 50 days, ministered to him while he was in extreme agony. St Francis cried to our Lord to help him to bear his suffering with patience.

*He heard a voice from God, **"Tell me, Brother: if, in compensation for your sufferings . . . you were given an immense and precious treasure: the whole . . . earth changed into pure gold, pebbles into precious stones, and the waters of the rivers into perfume. Would you not regard the pebbles and waters as nothing compared to such a treasure? Would you not rejoice?"***

*Francis responded, Lord, it would be a very great, a very precious, and inestimable treasure beyond all else that one can love and desire." The voice he heard replied: **"Well, Brother be glad and joyful in the midst of your infirmities . . . as of now, live in peace as if you were already sharing my kingdom."***

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, SPECIAL JUBILEE YEAR
WHAT ABOUT ST. FRANCIS, PART VI
January 10, 2026—January 10, 2027



In the writing of this article of St. Francis it is now October, the month we celebrate the Transitus of St. Francis of Assisi on October 3, 2026. We will celebrate Transitus with Blessed Jacoba of Settesoli, Jacqueline Marie de Settesoli, which St. Francis gave her the name, Brother Jacoba.

St. Francis of Assisi, who died October 3, 1226, at the age of 44 in a cell at the Portiuncula located near the chapel. He had requested to be moved to the Portiuncula, the place he so loved. St. Francis had been blind for approximately two years before his death with a disease of an infection in the eyes called Trachoma. A disease that could be treated today with antibiotics in the early stages of progression. The actual cause of St. Francis' death was determined to be Tubercular Leprosy, or just Leprosy, which today can be cured after twelve months of treatment.

St. Francis, at his request and in his humility, wanted to be laid on the bare earth. Those that were present were some of the brothers, but specifically mentioned were brothers, Leo, Rufino, Angelo, John de Laudibus, and of course Lady Jacoba de Settesoli, or Brother Jacoba. St. Clare of Assisi was not present. The Portiuncula is in the town of Santa Maria degli Angeli, 2.49 miles away from Assisi where the monastery of St. Clare, San Damiano is located.

Blessed Jacoba dei Settesoli was born in Rome and had married into a noble family. As she has been a young widow when she heard of St. Francis of Assisi in 1212, and was inspired to speak to this holy man to seek his spiritual advise. St. Francis at the time had traveled to Rome to obtain approval of the Franciscan Rule of life.

Blessed Jacoba had heard St. Francis speak, just as St. Clare of Assisi had been so inspired. She realized she wanted his guidance on living a life like that of St. Clare of Assisi. However, St. Francis advised her not to abandon her family. Jacoba had two sons and a responsibility of her late husband's vast estate. Instead she had had joined the Third Order of 2



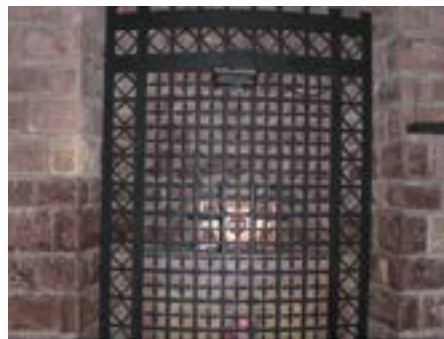
St. Francis and began living the Rule for Franciscan Tertiaries. She had turned her administration of the vast estate of her late husband to her two sons. The formal foundation of a third order was attributed to St. Francis after his death by Pope Nicholas IV, but did not actually happen until 1289.

Brother Jacoba, as St. Francis had called her, gave a portion of her family's property in Trastevere, Rome to St. Francis. The facility was used as a hospice for lepers, which she remained and cared for them.

Brother Thomas Celano, St. Francis's biographer, describes the miracles that were centered around the death of St. Francis. Brother Celano tell us, as St. Francis was close to death, St. Francis wanted a letter to be sent to Brother Jacoba to bring some grey cloth, useful for a burial shroud, candles, and the sweet cookies made of almonds and honey, which was called mostacciolo. Before the letter was sent off, Brother Jacoba had arrived with the burial shroud, candles and the sweet mostacciolo. She was accompanied by her two sons, Giovanni and Giacoma, with an armed escort. As women were forbidden within the cloister of a male religious community, St. Francis immediately made a new rule: The rule forbidding her to enter did not apply in this case as she was called Brother Jacoba.

Jacoba contributed the funds to help build the burial church ordered by Pope Gregory IX. After several years after the death of Jacoba in 1273, she was buried over the tomb of St. Francis of Assisi in the new Basilica. Today she is enclosed in a metal urn which is against the wall of the crypt of St. Francis of Assisi.

Sandy Baden, TOF



NEW NOVICES

On October 8th we will have 5 Inquirers who have entered the Novitiate formation program. Please keep them in your prayers as they continue to discern the spirituality of the Franciscan Order and that they will proceed to profession. They are:

*Antonio from Canberra, Australia
Eric, a seminarian studying in Louisiana
Kathy from Ohio
Marilyn & Peter from Ohio*

*Pax et bonum!
Ericka Witover, TOF
I.T. Master of Formation*

*Congratulations to **Antonio Gagliardi** for his Entrance into the Novitiate on September 17, 2026 at Sts. Peter and Paul Church Canberra with Fr. Paul Leung, FSSP as celebrant.*

I began researching third order groups as I wanted to deepen my spiritual growth. After speaking with local parishioners I was directed the Franciscan Third Order, which had a wonderful rich history and I was drawn to the Franciscan spirituality.



*Congratulations to **Eric Robert Salvadores Cormier** for his Entrance into the Novitiate on September 18, 2026 at the Holy Name of Mary CC, New Orleans, LA, with Rev. Fr. John Talamo as celebrant.*

His Patron Saint is St. Padre Pio, OFM

Congratulations to **Peter & Marilyn Salibi** for their Entrance into the Novitiate on September 23, 2026 at the St Padre Pio Parish in Lawrenceville, PA, with Fr. Joseph Tuscan, OFM as celebrant.

Peter's Patron Saints are St. Padre Pio, Joseph of Cupertino, and St. Francis of Assisi. Marilyn's Patron Saint is St. Angela Foligno.



Congratulations to **Kathleen Riggle** for her Entrance into the Novitiate on September 15, 2026 at St. John the Evangelist, Philadelphia, PA with Fr. Thomas Betz as celebrant.

Kathy's Patron Saint is St. Hyacintha Mariscotti

Ericka Witover, TOF will be offering an online Transitus Service at 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 4:00 PM Pacific Time. Ericka will send out an invite the night before.

GETTING TO KNOW OUR NOVICES

MANDY DAVIS, NOVICE



Thank you for the opportunity to share a little about myself as I prepare to make my profession into the Third Order Franciscans. As this day draws closer, I find myself looking over my life and realizing how faithfully God has been present through every season, through tremendous blessings, unexpected changes, deep loss, and new beginnings.

My name is Amanda “Mandy” Davis. Of all the titles I have held in my life, the ones connected to my family and my faith, are the ones I treasure the most. I was blessed to be the wife of a deacon, and I will always be incredibly proud of that part of my life. Being a deacon’s wife gave me a unique opportunity to experience the Church, not

simply as a place where we worship, but as a family we are called to love and serve. Walking beside my husband in his vocation taught me so much about service, sacrifice, compassion, and answering God’s call even when it requires something of us.

I am also the very proud mother of two amazing sons, Cameron and Ryan, who are serving our country in the military. Watching the men they have become is one of the greatest joys of my life. Being their mother has taught me about unconditional love, sacrifice, letting go, trusting in God, and, of course, praying—a lot!

I currently serve as the parish secretary at Our Lady of the Meadow Catholic Church. My educational and professional journey has taken me down several different paths. I hold a bachelor’s degree in Industrial Engineering and a Master’s degree in Education, and I am currently pursuing a master’s degree in Evangelization at The Catholic University of America. I can see how God has used each chapter of my life in ways I could not always see at the time. My studies in evangelization are especially meaningful to me now as I continue to discern how God is calling me, not only to deepen my own faith, but also to share the joy of the Gospel with others.

My relationship with God has changed tremendously throughout my life. There was a time when I thought having faith meant understanding God’s plan. Life has taught me something very different. Faith is often trusting God when I do not understand His plan at all.

I have experienced great love and tremendous loss. Losing my husband changed my life in ways that are difficult to put into words. Grief taught me that sometimes faith is not having the right words or answers. Sometimes faith is simply continuing to place

one foot in front of the other while holding onto God and trusting that He is holding onto you. Through these experiences my Catholic faith became much more than something I practiced. It became the foundation of my life.



The Eucharist has become especially important to me. There is something incredibly powerful about kneeling before Christ and realizing that I do not have to have everything figured out. I simply have to come to Him. The Mass, prayer, and time spent in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, has taught me to surrender more of myself to God and to trust Him more completely.

My journey toward the Third Order Franciscans grew naturally from that deepening relationship with Christ. The more I learned about St. Francis, the more I was drawn to the simplicity and sincerity of his Faith. Francis did not merely believe the Gospel—he wanted to live it. That is what I desire for my own life.

I am especially drawn to the Franciscan call to humility, simplicity, peace, service and seeing Christ in every person, particularly those who may feel forgotten, lonely, grieving, or overlooked. Franciscan spirituality reminds me that holiness does not necessarily happen through extraordinary things. Very often, it happens in ordinary moments when we choose patience instead of frustration, kindness instead of selfishness, and love instead of indifference.

As I prepare to make my profession, I realize that I am not promising that I have everything figured out or that I will live the Franciscan life perfectly. Quite the opposite. I am saying a deeper “yes” to continuing the journey with Christ.

I want Franciscan spirituality to influence the way I pray, the way I work, the way I love my family, the way I serve my parish, and especially the way I encounter people who are hurting. I want to become more attentive to God’s presence in the ordinary moments of each day and more willing to go wherever He asks me to go.

When I look back over my life, I can see that God has used both joy and sorrow to bring me closer to Him. He has taught me that life can change very quickly, that people are precious, that forgiveness matters, that service matters, and that ultimately everything we have is a gift.

Making my profession as a Third Order Franciscan is not an ending for me. It is another beginning—a deeper “yes” to God. My prayer is that I can live the rest of my life with the simplicity and joy of St. Francis: loving Christ, loving His Church, serving His people, bringing peace where I can, and remembering that sometimes the most powerful way we proclaim the Gospel is simply through the way we live.

LEONARD ANDREW REYES VILLANUEVA, NOVICE
Submitted by Sandy Baden, TOF, Editor



On September 19, 1992, Leonard Villanueva was baptized at the Mary the Queen Parish in San Juan City, Metro Manila. He was raised in a Catholic family and was provided Catholic schooling with regular Sunday Mass.

In high school he received catechesis at the school of the SFSC sisters. Leonard's turning point for his personal commitment to the faith happened in 2008 when participating in the Catholic life in the Spirit Seminary.

Leonard is a son of an OB-GYN and a Lawyer. He is the eldest of three siblings, with two brothers and one sister. He is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, via distance learning. Leonard is working with English as a second language (ESL) and educator alongside remote freelance work. He is an active lay liturgical minister (commissioned Psalmist and inducted Cantor) at the Minor Basilica and National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians Parish, Paranaque City, Philippines.

Encountering Franciscan spirituality in high school, which was run by the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart, was his initial experience to the Franciscan way of life. Leonard entered formation with the Capuchin Franciscans (OFM Cap) in 2012, only to find, after discerning, he was not called to the First Order of consecrated life. Researching the Third Order Franciscans online, the TOF seemed to be aligned with Traditional Catholicism, the Rule of 1883, with spiritual direction from the First Order friars or the TOR was what he was looking for.

Leonard states his aim is to model daily life after St. Francis and the Tertiary saints by living the Gospel, witnessing primarily through quiet action and service, and applying the Rule faithfully within a modern context.

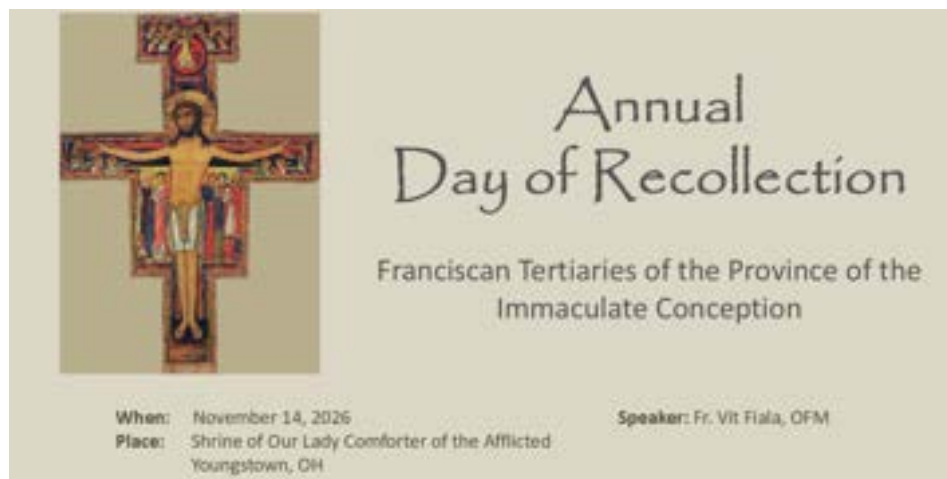
VIRTUAL MONTHLY ZOOM GATHERING, OCTOBER 1, 2026

*Our topic for our Virtual Monthly Zoom Gathering will be presented by:
Linda Menser, TOF, "Meeting St. Francis"*



Linda Menser, TOF was professed in May 2019. She is an energetic Army veteran and a retired postal carrier. Linda was our Monthly Zoom Coordinator from 2021-2024 and one of the first Isolated Tertiaries in 2021. She currently cares for her father, who is 96 years old, in Oceanside, Ca. Linda has three grown sons and four grandchildren.

In the picture on the left shows Linda hugging her dog, Copper, who has since passed away. We look forward to Linda's presentation on "Meeting St. Francis."





"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, TOF
Judith Inglesby, TOF***

TUESDAY

Linda Menser, TOF

WEDNESDAY

***Luis Guzman, TOF
Paul & Mary Tag, TOF***

THURSDAY

***Mary Colon, TOF
Bob Zupanek, TOF
Lisa Bute***

FRIDAY

***Sandy DeWaal, 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 the intentions of the members of the Isolated Tertiaries
Community.***

ADMONITION XXVI: Respect for the Clergy/Luthar Hardic, OFM
(Study on the Admonitions of St. Francis of Assisi by: Sandy Baden, TOF)



Blessed is that servant of God who has confidence in priests who live according to the laws of the Holy Roman Church. Woe to those who despise them. Even if they fall into sin, no one should pass judgement on them, for God has reserved judgement on them to himself. They are in a privileged position, because they have charge of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which they receive and which they alone administer to others, and so anyone who sins against them commits a greater crime than if he signed against anyone else in the whole world.

In reading Admonition XXVI it tells us what a strong advocate St. Francis of Assisi was concerning the Clergy, especially priests. It is a reminder also of the name of a person, Mutter Vogel, who is Katharina Vogel, a German Third Order Franciscan, a holy woman who passed away in 1956. In the little blue book, the Pieta, on the last page it speaks of Mutter Vogel and the revelation she received from God on "Criticism of Priests." Her cause for beatification is still open. She received revelations concerning the importance of prayer and penance. What is said in the Pieta certainly backs up exactly what St. Francis of Assisi is saying in Admonition XXVI.

In our culture we automatically would speak out if we see or hear something that is wrong or out of place. However, based on what this Admonition implies, we should speak to the Priest privately. If that does not help the next step would be to send a letter to the Bishop, keeping in mind the reputation of the Priest.

As this Admonition indicates we should render our opinions to ourselves and is a reminder of Admonition XVIII, "Compassion for Ones Neighbor. In all cases, we should love our neighbor as ourselves and even more so a Priest. If we despise Priests or pass judgement on them we are not living up to our obligation to loving our neighbor as ourselves. How

could anyone despise a Priest? Priests are just as susceptible to sin as we are. Admonition XXVI clearly indicates we should have more compassion for a Priest above all others. The life for a Priest is extremely difficult as Lothar Hardick, OFM reiterates.



After prayer and contemplation of this Admonition for not passing judgement on Priests, it seems to come into focus why St. Francis states, **“no one should pass judgement on them for God has reserved judgement on them to himself.”** Being this is the case Priests are in a privileged position, as also Mutter Vogel implies. If you love the Holy Eucharist, then you can love and respect the Priest, who by his anointed hands consecrates the Host for it to become the **“Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Without this grace, given to us by our Lord and consecrated by the Priest, we would be missing something in our spiritual lives. How could we love our neighbor as ourselves with a deeper understanding of how God loves us? How else could our Lord Jesus Christ be given to us in the Eucharist without giving that privilege to our Priests? Without the Priest and his anointed hands, then Jesus’ death on the cross would have no meaning. Another thought, Jesus gave the authority only for a Priest to absolve us from our sins, **(John 20:23)**. This we know, and for this we thank our Lord Jesus Christ for giving us Priests and their anointed hands.

An ardent defender of Priests are the members of the Knights of Columbus and they always carry a Rosary in their pockets. They give a sacred vow to protect and defend the Priest. What a wonderful commitment if only we would do the same. Let us pray for ourselves and for our Priests, let us have a better understanding, and let us learn to protect and defend our Priests.

St. Padres Pio had said: **“Priests are essential mediators between God and the faithful, deserving utmost respect.”**

SAVE THE DATE

OCTOBER 1: IT ZOOM GATHERING: 7:00 PM Eastern time, 4:00 PM Pacific Time. Discussion topic to be presented by: Linda Menser, TOF, "Meeting St. Francis"

OCTOBER. 3: TRANSITUS OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

ERICKA WITOVER, TOF: Will be offering an online Transitus Service at 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 4:00 PM Pacific Time. Ericka will send out an invite the night before.

OCTOBER 5, 12, 19, and 26: MONDAY'S WITH MARY: 6:30 PM Eastern Time, 3:30 PM Pacific Time.

OCTOBER. 8: NOVITIATE GROUP 6: 7:00 PM Eastern time, 4:00 PM Pacific Time.

OCTOBER 15: NOVITIATE GROUP 5: 7:00 PM Eastern Time, 4:00 PM Pacific Time.