

SUMMER



2025

Connecting Secular Franciscan Fraternities throughout our region.



Frances Acosta, OFS Editor

St. Maximilian Kolbe Fraternity, Charlotte, NC

smfranciscanministry@gmail.com

My 2025 Summer Reading Picks

I don't know about you, but it feels like this summer has certainly snuck in rather quickly and unexpectedly. I am not complaining at all, as I wholeheartedly welcome the warmth and sunshine, but I am particularly looking forward to my cherished summer reading ritual that I enjoy every year. Below are my carefully selected picks for summer reading in 2025 that I believe will be both enlightening and enjoyable.

If you enjoy the Fr. Brown series, you'll appreciate the engaging characters in **The Sleeping Witness: A Father Gabriel Mystery** by Fiorella De Maria. The plot revolves around a murder at Saint Mary's Abbey, where a foreign artist is found dead, and Marie Paige, the doctor's wife, is in a coma. The police suspect her husband, but Fr. Gabriel, a Benedictine priest, defends him and seeks the truth. Set in post-World War II, the story reveals the village's secrets and the victims' dark pasts.

For spiritual reading, consider **"The Life of St. Maximilian Kolbe: Apostle of Mass Communications"** by William L. LaMay. It details St. Maximilian Kolbe's journey, his encounter with the Virgin Mary, and his commitment to the Franciscan order and Marian devotion. Aiming to save souls through Christ and His Mother, he made sacrifices and sought sainthood through love for others. He died in Auschwitz, giving his life for another. Despite his intelligence, he chose to serve Jesus' mother and dedicated his life to helping others. His experiences mirrored Christ's words: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon. "Disorienting and reorienting... Suspenseful and harrowing." —The New York Times. Christopher Boone excels in geography and prime numbers but struggles with human emotions, dislikes touch, and hates yellow. His probe into a neighborhood dog's death forms a unique and engaging story.

Whatever adventure you decide to participate in over the summer, whether it's exploring nature, traveling, or simply relaxing at home, do not forget to grab a good read. Choose one or all of these carefully curated recommendations or select a book of your own choosing that piques your interest. Remember to take some time out of your busy schedule to enjoy these literary journeys. Happy Reading!

Frances



Frances Acosta, OFS
Founder of Stella Mundi Franciscan Ministry
stellamundi-ofs.org



Regional Council Members:

Chris Leone, OFS
Regional Minister

Joe Wickham, OFS
Vice Minister

Debbie Wickham, OFS
Treasurer

Ed Wojciechowski, OFS
Formation Director

Mary-Frances Reavey, OFS
Secretary

Italia Testa, OFS
Councilor Central Jersey, Staten Island

Jim Andreano, OFS
Councilor North Jersey and JPIC Chair

Paul Beelitz, OFS
Councilor Manhattan

Susan Leyden, OFS
Councilor Westchester

Br. Rudolph Pieretti, OFM Cap.
Regional Spiritual Assistant



Listen, Discern, Go Forth

2022-2025 OFS-USA THEME



Minister

Our Lady of the Angels Region

cleoneofs@gmail.com

What's in a Name?

Wow! We have our first American Pope but I think the American part was not a significant factor in his election. He has been deemed the "least American" of the US Cardinals probably because he spent over 2 decades in Peru, first as a missionary and then as Bishop. He is also a Peruvian citizen.

I think his election may have more to do with the fact that he was someone very close to Pope Francis. Also, being a missionary, someone committed to the synodal process, a moderate progressive and a religious (Augustinian) had more to do with his election, in my humble opinion.

His choice of a name is also telling. Following the 19th century Leo XIII (a Secular Franciscan, by the way), who was a proponent of social justice and Catholic Social Teaching gives us a glimpse of what his focus may be. Pope Leo XIII's encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (which translates Of New Things or Of Revolutionary Change), addresses the social and economic issues arising from the Industrial Revolution, particularly the conflict between capital and labor. It is considered a foundational document of Catholic Social Teaching.



The Church's social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amid the challenges of modern society. It incorporates seven key themes. Here is a synopsis from the USCCB website.

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The Church proclaims that human life is sacred and the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

How we organize our society – in economics and politics, in law and policy – directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.

Rights and Responsibilities

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring.

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. (This was the crux of *Rerum Novarum*).

Solidarity

We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are brothers and sisters.

Care for God's Creation

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan; it is a requirement of our faith.

Let us pray that Pope Leo XIV receives divine guidance and wisdom and that the Holy Spirit will guide him as he leads our Church and the world toward peace, love, and unity.



Regional Spiritual Assistant

Our Lady of the Angels Region

rpieretti@capuchinfriars.org

A Stitch in Time

A man walked into a tailor's shop one fine day and asked the tailor behind the counter, "How much do your suits cost?" The tailor thoughtfully replied, "If you have to ask how much they cost—you can't afford them." The same is true of ourselves. How often do we ask the Lord, "How much does it cost?" Whether we are making our calculations in terms of time, money or effort we want to make sure the return is worth the investment. We're not alone in this. It seems that people of all ages and circumstances have been asking this question. The young man in the Gospel queried our Lord with the words, "What must I do to gain eternal life?" The notion of earning our salvation is not new. Trouble is, there is some truth to the concept. We do in fact have to play our part. We are called upon to go the extra mile, practice the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy and to be Christ-like in all manner of things. This essentially means going to the cross, paying the ultimate price.

But at the same time, we as finite creatures can never earn, deserve, or be entitled to all that the eternal, omnipotent God has in store for us. We can't afford heaven. It is always and forever **gift**. The challenge is to avoid getting stuck in either of the two extremes—thinking that all depends on me and my efforts, or thinking that I have a free ride since Christ has in fact won our eternal salvation. Perhaps the saints said it best, "Work as if all depends on you, and pray as if all depends on God."

That gentle, unassuming tailor behind the counter had come to this country as a young immigrant from Italy. He carried within himself with an inborn dignity and self-respect, so characteristic of a bygone era; he wore his cloth tape measure around his neck with as much poise as a monsignor might wear his stole. With his needle and thread he provided for his family, put his three sons through college and lived to see the day when one of them would become a priest.

This Easter Season we should be brimming with a spirit of thanksgiving. We recall St. Francis when he was nearing the end of his life and was encapsulated within that little hut of suffering, composed the Cantic of Creatures replete with a spirit of gratitude and praise. May the Risen Lord give us the grace to embrace Psalm 116 as it proclaims, "**How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good He has done for Me?**"

Bro. Rod





Regional Formation Director

Saint Anthony-Butler-NJ

edwojosfo@gmail.com

Our Hope is in God's Love and Mercy

In this special Jubilee Year, we trust in God's love and kindness. God's amazing gift to all of us is His love and mercy, which comes through the Holy Spirit. God the Father created us and gave us life. God the Son saved us and forgave all our sins. God the Spirit gives us life and helps us with wisdom, understanding, advice, courage, knowledge, and a fear of God. Before He left this world, Jesus promised His followers that He would send the Holy Spirit to be with us always until the end of time. It's the gift of the Holy Spirit that makes us Secular Franciscans and calls us to live a simple, holy life.

The Holy Spirit unites us to Jesus and the cross. The Holy Spirit is a cause for great joy and hope in our lives. Our vocation as a Franciscan is a call to love which attracts us and draws us out of ourselves and liberates us towards authentic self-discovery and the discovery of God.

The Holy Spirit is essential to the life of a Secular Franciscan as a guide for our actions and deeds. The Holy Spirit is mercy in action in our lives. Our Rule tells us that we are "raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church" (Rule 2:4) and led by the Spirit to 'strive for perfect charity' (Rule 1:2). The Holy Spirit is the source of our vocation and the 'animator of fraternal life and mission' (GC 11) This is why our lives must be focused on contemplation, prayer and formation.

Our fraternities are like a big, loving family where we come together to share our Franciscan calling. It's a special place to celebrate our joys and comfort each other during tough times. It's where we can find strength and renewal to spread the Gospel to everyone we meet. So, our goal is to live a life of faith, hope, and love. If we follow our Rule and trust in the Holy Spirit, our fraternities will grow in love and joy as we continue to celebrate this special Jubilee Year of Hope.

Pax et Bonum,

Ed





Councilor, North Jersey

Most Holy Name, Little Falls NJ

jimandreano@gmail.com

A Reflection on the Immigration Justice Retreat

This was co-written with Susan Leyden, Councilor, Westchester
Servants of God Fraternity, Yonkers NY

Beginning May 8 through the 11th, the two of us were privileged to participate in the SFO National Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC-USA) Regional Animators Retreat, held at Holy Cross Retreat Center in Las Cruces, New Mexico, where "Franciscan Hospitality" (a/k/a Sanctuary) is compassionately and generously provided by Fr. Thomas A. Smith, OFM Conv. and Staff. Significant is that Pope Leo XIV was elected as we were arriving! We celebrated Masses and gathered for Morning and Evening Prayers. Immigration Justice was the primary focus of the Retreat. We would like to share with you some of our reflections on that experience.

1. Visit to "The Wall." Our group of 30 participated in a Prayer Vigil in El Paso, TX, at the border wall between the U.S. and Mexico. This section of the wall is an 18 to 27-foot high 'picket' fence, not very visually imposing. About a mile away, however, the wall becomes more ominous, consisting of rows of circular razor wire.

This section of the wall is only a couple of blocks from urban El Paso, consisting of worn and tired -most dilapidated- mobile homes situated very closely together. The wall invoked a feel of desolation. Unmarked, no signage, nothing around but sand on the U.S. side; much debris, clothes, shoes, etc. on the Mexican side. No signs of human or animal life, and little vegetation.

While we were congregating, someone yelled, "Border Patrol coming! Everybody back into the vans!" This was probably tongue in cheek; however, we were warned by Immigrant Activists that Border Patrol personnel take photos, can question us, and request valid and current identification. That said, the Border Patrol vehicle making its rounds up and down the sandy path presented no real cause for alarm. They weren't looking for us. Nonetheless, we reflexively hustled back to the van. For a brief moment, we experienced the panic of an exhausted, famished, (often times very ill) migrant family being detected. A moment of empathy that we hope never to forget.

We were informed that, as of May 1, the local military bases' perimeters had been expanded 50 miles, which translates that anyone can be charged with 'trespassing' and brought to and held in jail. Soon, we will begin to see armed soldiers patrolling; some have already been seen wearing masks.

2. Testimony of the Experts. We learned from expert activist speakers (Ruben Garcia, Casa de Assumption), who for decades have aided incoming migrants and refugees. A primary takeaway was that under the current administration, for most would-be immigrants, all legal pathways to immigration have been closed. The flow of legal refugees to the U.S. has been shut off. Political asylum seekers are being turned away at the border, and their appointments (scheduled while in their home country and/or while here) for interviews with U.S. border authorities have been cancelled. This despite the fact that the right to apply for asylum is guaranteed both under U.S. law and international treaties.

We asked Mr. Garcia how someone could legally immigrate into the U.S. nowadays. The response was to "find a citizen who is willing to marry you."

As a result, a prospective immigrant has little choice other than to attempt to do so illegally. Perhaps more troubling, many immigrants who are already here (legal or otherwise) have become too intimidated to seek legal and social services, resulting in unnecessary suffering to immigrant children and their families.

3. Constructive Dialogue. Two Fraternities of Our Lady of Guadalupe Empress of the Americas Region, El Paso, hosted Mass, luncheon, and talk by Marco Raposo (JPIC and Laudato Si) at San Martin de Porres Parish. Our Franciscan brothers and sisters went above and beyond in Franciscan hospitality. Their minister spoke to us on her experiences as a first generation immigrant. Somewhat surprisingly, her view on current immigration was lukewarm at best. Her message was that her family had sacrificed to come to the U.S. "the right way" through legal channels. She showed little sympathy for those who arrive without legal authorization.



Councilor, North Jersey

Most Holy Name, Little Falls NJ

jimandreano@gmail.com

The flaw in her argument is that as a practical matter, the legal channels for immigration no longer exist for most people. But that aside, her concerns were instructive. She spoke passionately from her lived experience, her "piece of the truth" so to speak. She did not possess the whole truth on this matter. Neither did we, as we could not know her lived experience. But collectively, we could get closer to the full truth.

The Priest who had led our group, Fr. Ignatius Harding, attempted to engage in constructive dialogue. He listened attentively, and then offered his factual commentary politely but strongly. Like Francis, we must never be shy about speaking the truth - at least that portion of the truth that we possess.

On Saturday, our day was full with Border Ministries Panel (with Q&A), JPIC Animator Role Panel, and a joy-filled, hope-filled presentation by Fr. Henry Beck, OFM on "*Franciscan Spirituality of Beauty*." We concluded with a "Round Table" hearing from Animators from Maine, Virginia, Long Island, Wyoming, California, New Mexico, and more; and finally, a sending forth blessing.

4. What Is Ours To Do? Sadly, there is little that can be done right now to assist incoming migrants, since the flow of incoming migrants has been cut off. However, we can help in two ways:

a. **Assistance to those who are already here.** This may be most effectively achieved through partnership with an existing non-profit organization.

Please contact JimAndreano@gmail.com if you wish to discuss further.

b. **Advocacy.** This can involve working with local, state, and federal government elected officials to achieve positive change. Or, it may mean working to change those elected officials. We know that political action is not within everyone's comfort zone. But like Moses, if we want to secure justice, we may have to confront Pharaoh and demand it.



Photo credit: Donna Hollis, OFS





PROFESSIONS, ADMISSIONS & ELECTIONS, ETC



Anniversary of Profession

Assumption Fraternity Wood Ridge, NJ

Ms. Theresa Zito, O.F.S.
60 years
Dr. Christopher L. Trause, O.F.S.
31 years
Mr. John J. Trause, O.F.S.
31 years
Mrs. Lillian Kapeller, O.F.S.
28 years.

Joyfully announced that it
celebrated the Ceremony on the
Anniversary of Profession
on
May 02, 2025

The Council recognized the
diamond, pearl, and
silver jubilees of its members who
made a permanent and definitive
commitment to the Gospel Life
according to the
Rule of the Secular Franciscan
Order.



Ceremony of Welcoming

St. Francis Fraternity Hackensack, NJ

Celebrated on
May 8, 2025

for
Alicia Arana
&
John Previty

CONGRATULATIONS!

Living The Canticle of Creatures

Praise God

begin and end all personal prayer by praising and thanking
God – even a simple “praise and thank You, God, for ...

All creatures, especially Brother Sun – brings light &
warmth

- Greet all with a smile and a kind word
- Present the positive side to a sad or dark event
- Visit a shut-in, send a card, phone call or text message

Continued on next page



Sister Moon and the stars – is clear, bright & beautiful

- Take the time to clarify your or another person's point of view/words used in a discussion, especially if you think there is a disagreement between you
- In group discussions, willing share your knowledge or experience on the topic

Sister Water – fresh, humble, useful, chaste

- Without "hogging" or controlling the conversation, share your knowledge, wisdom, or experience on the topic being discussed
- Speak up when conversations or actions become disrespectful, unkind, impure or ungodly

Brother Fire – offers light & warmth, is beautiful, playful, robust & strong

- Look for opportunities to bring light & inner warmth to another person
- Encourage others to see their own inner beauty
- Take time to be "Playful" without being the "class clown"
- When presentations seem too long without a break, suggest a short break
- During the break, tell a joke or silly story; a story about you that was somewhat embarrassing or funny – something to lighten the mood, make people laugh
- Offer support & encouragement to others by pointing out how or when they were strong/robust or how they might become stronger/more robust in similar situations in the future



Brother Wind and the weather – has a cooling effect; helps to change the weather; helps to fertilize & propagate food for all creation

- Become the "breath of fresh air"
add a different point of view to a discussion
change the subject when necessary
be a peacemaker – when discussions become "heated", help the parties find points on which they can agree
- Another opportunity to give praise & glory to God

Sister Mother Earth – sustains & governs creation/creatures

- Be grateful for & offer thanks & praise to God for this assistance
- Become ever more mindful of our need to become more aware of the effect(s) our actions have on "Mother Earth" & all parts of creation
- Encourage others to become more grateful & more aware of the effects of their actions

Give pardon for the love of God (if not for love of the other person)

- "Forgive us our trespasses/sins/hurts to others as we forgive them their trespasses/sins/hurts to us"
- "As you do unto others; so shall I do unto you" (think of harsh words spoken by another, being unforgiving, ignoring or shunning the one who caused the hurt, etc.)
- "The measure you use will be the measure I use"
- Offer forgiveness to the other even if (s)he doesn't ask for it – forgiving the other brings you Peace
- When strong emotions have calmed down, dialog with the other re the hurt you experienced – avoid phrases like "you always .."; "You never..." etc.
- Blessed are those who endure in peace. Bear/endure infirmities & small tribulations – offer them to God in expiation of your personal sins

Welcome Sister Bodily Death – it is the door to eternal happiness with God & all the saints

- Pray & be vigilant to avoid mortal sin
- Support, encourage, accompany the dying.

The Centenary Task Force (2025)



CONVIVENZA

March 29th 2025

HIGHLIGHTS



NEWS AROUND THE REGION



Photo credits:
Diane F. Menditto, OFS &
Ed Wojciechowski, OFS &



Servants of God Fraternity

Yonkers, New York

Spirit of St. Francis at Work in Fraternity

On Wednesday, March 12, 2025, the dedicated and compassionate Servants of God Fraternity brothers and sisters joyfully came together, united in their shared mission, to assemble much-needed donated items, thereby creating thoughtful and heartfelt "Baby Blessing Bags." These carefully curated bags are specifically intended to be generously donated to Good Counsel Homes, which is a nationally recognized nonprofit leader and innovator in creating supportive residential care and community-based services for homeless, expectant, and new mothers and their children, all within the context of the Catholic social tradition. Pregnant and expectant mothers, whether they have other born children or not, including mothers who may be facing mental health or addiction challenges, from any location, are able to receive vital help in a Good Counsel home.



Photo credit: Susan M. Leyden, OFS

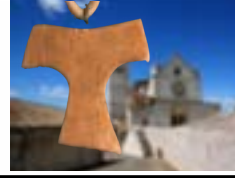
Left to right:

Fr. Lawrence Joseph Schroedel, CFR - **Spiritual Assistant**;
Jeannie Sweeney, **Candidate**; Diana Rosa Bonilla, **Candidate**;
Rosa Cerrato, **Aspirant**, Tom Scheuring, **Minister**.

Founded in 1985, Good Counsel has been committed to assisting families in need, and its outreach program continues to thrive to this very day. Currently, Good Counsel operates four homes: three located in New York State counties—namely the Bronx, Richmond (Staten Island), and Rockland—and one in New Jersey's Burlington County, which is just outside Camden and in close proximity to Philadelphia. This dedicated organization provides essential and lifesaving support for homeless pregnant women and their vulnerable newborns who find themselves in dire need. The concerted efforts of the entire Servants of God community truly reflect a profound commitment to assisting those who are facing incredibly difficult circumstances during what can be an extraordinarily crucial and transformative time in their lives. To learn more about this wonderful program, please use the link below

[Good Counsel | Lifesaving Support for Homeless Pregnant Women](#)





Chris Leone, Minister

cleoneofs@gmail.com

REMEMBERING POPE FRANCIS – THE PEOPLE'S POPE

***"Praised be you, my Lord,
through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whom no one living can
escape."***

Heavenly Father,
May Your faithful servant, Pope Francis,
a son of the Church, rest eternally with you,
in deep peace and great joy.
During his tenure as pope, he taught us
that tenderness and mercy are the heart of
the Gospel and that a Church without joy
was unacceptable.

He reminded us that we are all made
in the image of You, loving god.
He stressed our responsibility to protect
marginalized people and advocate for
poverty reduction around the world.

As he will be remembered for unifying
Catholicism's voice and centralizing it's
doctrine, many of us will celebrate his love
of joy, his simple ways and his great
humility.

Eternal rest grant unto him and let the
perpetual light of Your love shine upon him
always. Amen.



This is a photo I took in November 2022 during a pilgrimage to Rome.

Born:
December 17, 1936
Ordained Priest:
December 13, 1969

Ordained Bishop:
May 27, 1992
Created Cardinal:
February 21, 2001

Elected Pope:
March 13, 2013
Welcomed Sister Death:
April 21, 2025



Frances Acosta, OFS Editor

St. Maximillian Kolbe Fraternity, Charlotte, NC

smfranciscanministry@gmail.com

You are Chosen!



Pope Francis offers comfort to an individual during a meeting with a group of the sick, people with disabilities, and the poor, in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Sept. 5, 2024. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

"The world tells us to seek success, power and money; God tells us to seek humility, service and love." Pope Francis

As I write this reflection, I am filled with a mix of emotions as Pope Francis has now been laid to rest. What a truly beautiful funeral it was, and it certainly encapsulated the spirit of St. Francis that he embodied so well. Pope Francis, was a great model of Servant Leadership. He demonstrated servant leadership through his consistent focus on compassion, humility, and unwavering service to others, particularly those who are poor and marginalized in society. He prioritized open dialogue, active listening, and deep empathy, and his actions consistently reflected a firm belief that true leadership is genuinely found in serving others and walking alongside them during their struggles. He was often thinking of the common citizen, as clearly articulated in his heartfelt comments about migrants, refugees, and people on the margins of society. Even for his own funeral proceedings, he chose a simple wooden coffin and deliberately stipulated that his body be buried not in the Vatican's glorious St. Peter's Basilica, which is known for its grandeur, but rather across town in a smaller, more humble space that aligned with his values.

I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have had the opportunity to attend one of his events during his visit to New York City back in September 2015. The papal gathering at Madison Square Garden was particularly special, as Pope Francis celebrated a Holy Mass there. It was undoubtedly a deeply spiritually moving experience for everyone present. As he circled the floor of the garden alongside Cardinal Dolan, I seized the moment and used my cafeteria voice to call out, "Papa Francesco, paz y bien." In that instant, I captured a photograph as he looked up and waved back at me, a memory I will cherish forever. (Picture below) As dedicated pilgrims of hope, how can we actively continue to uphold and carry forward his enduring legacy?

After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his devoted disciples, offering them reassurance and guidance in their newfound purpose. He then sent them out with a profound mandate to share the joyous good news of his resurrection and to make disciples of all nations, regardless of their backgrounds. We are called, chosen through our baptism, this significant directive, known as the "Great Commission," clearly outlines our vital mission to spread the gospel not only in words but with our lives.

Like Jesus, Pope Francis challenges us to go out into our community, our workplace, and the wider world around us. He encourages us to actively seek and embrace opportunities to take the basin and wash the feet of others in a meaningful way. It is our duty to build up and support those who are less fortunate, offering our help and compassion wherever it is needed most.

"Christ, my hope, has risen! He lives and reigns in glory. Death has been transformed into triumph, and the faith and great hope of Christians rests in this: the resurrection of Christ!" -Pope Francis

Thank you Papa Francesco for all you have done for our church. (to paraphrase my beloved St. Francis of Assisi.....) **"YOU have done what was yours to do, may Christ now teach us what is ours are to do."**



A Cherished Photo!

NY Papal visit

September 2015

stellamundi-ofs.org



Jeannie Sweeney

Servants of God Fraternity

Yonkers, NY

Hold High the Torch of Hope

"May your life be a reflection of hope..." Pope Francis

Habemus Papum! This reflection began immediately after Pope Francis' death and was near completion when the white smoke poured out from the Sistine Chapel indicating we have a new Pope. Although I am excited for the blessings of our new holy father, Pope Leo XIV, I'm holding on a little longer in commemorating my dear Pope Francis. I'm not quite ready to let go and move on just yet. As a man who loved white roses, I will be forever inspired by his most tenderest of hearts. I was in love with his beautiful piety, endearing smile and gentle spirit.

Pope Francis' works of mercy and devotion to the poor were immeasurable. Pope Francis was a man of action, a man of humility and grace, a man who lived the Gospel with joy. He loved each and every one of us as if we were the one lone sheep in his loving heart—the shepherd who spiritually held me in his protective arms from the callous assault of the secular world. He was always inviting me to be joyful in the Lord and to *go forward* despite the brokenness within my own wounded heart.

Every foot he bent down to wash and kiss was Jesus. Every prisoner, every disabled person, every child he embraced and blessed with his hands was Jesus. Every country, especially those on the periphery, were drawn to the pastoral priest with the welcoming heart. In his travels, he would stop along the roadside to extend a loving touch to a person sick or in a wheelchair. If the needy couldn't get to him, he made sure he reached them with open arms! My heart melts every time I see a captured moment of his beautiful humanity. Probably the most poignant of all is that he collected rubber bands for his paper boy when he was a



Photo credit: <https://catholiccourier.com/>

Cardinal in Argentina. Despite the army of critics, he followed Jesus' call to mercy and love. This was Pope Francis' greatest gift flowing from Jesus' pierced side!

I've been blessed to have received the Holy Eucharist consecrated by Pope Francis at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and in Madison Square Garden when he came to New York in 2015. The presence of holiness makes one's heart beat a little differently as you feel a deeper connection to the glistening light of your soul when it becomes immersed in the inexpressible love that can only come from God Almighty.

I recently received my Rite of Profession as a Secular Franciscan. It was a beautiful experience and I feel somewhat different since I made my profession in early April. My faith mission is stronger and more focused. Pope Francis once said something incredibly profound that aligns with my passion to serve God and that is... "artists are apostles of beauty." In the spirit of St. Francis, I long to do my part as co-creator in building up the Church with my gifts, brick by brick, song by song, story by story. All for God's glory and honor, one exquisite rose petal at a time.

Pope Francis knew his failing health was fragile but he still rallied for his flock wishing everyone a Happy Easter even though his voice was somewhat breathless. I believe it was to say goodbye one last time to his beloved sheep. He finished the race with a surrendering grace.

Rest in heavenly peace, Papa Francesco.

In faith-
Jeannie Sweeney, OFS

FOLLOWING IN HIS FOOTSTEPS



Father

Poem written for Pope Francis



Kindness was the vestment
you wore, a smile lit your
face.

Compassion filled your eyes,
from the loveflow of your
heart always cradling the
poor, forgotten, unwelcomed.

You weren't perfect-- you
were the one to say so.
Being human was humility,
reaching out to touch Christ
in all people.

Simplicity and clarity made
your spirit sing, your soul fill
with joy you freely shared.
Thanks and gratitude made
love brave and true.

Now, saying goodbye is
sorrowful, yet, your of faith
will light hearts forever.

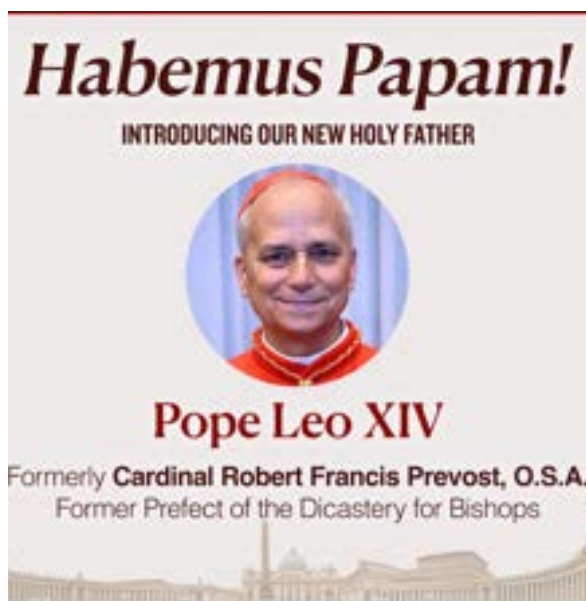
Valerie Moreno,
St. John Vianney Fraternity
Colonia, NJ



[Click photo for the BBC UK website](#)



[Click photo for Spotify Playlist](#)



Holy Spirit, once again
You have spoken.
Through the voices of human
beings
You have chosen
Pope Leo XIV to guide us.
We pray that You will
guide him.
Help him in his service
to You, the Church,
and the world.
Help him offer a
beacon of love
To those searching
for hope
Amidst the chaos of
our changing planet.
In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.



Chris Leone, Minister

cleoneofs@gmail.com

THE REAL PRESENCE



Internet Image from Eucharist (4)

In October 1995, St. Pope John Paul II was making one of his seven pastoral visits to the USA, which included a stop in Baltimore, where he also met with seminarians.

Before his meeting, the pope wanted to pray in the seminary chapel. The security detail wanted to make sure no one was hiding in there, so to be sure it was safe, they released their sniffing dogs into the chapel.

Immediately, the dogs began barking and whining to indicate someone was in the chapel, even though the dog handlers could not see anyone.

When the security and handlers went to see where the dogs were barking, they found them gathered around the tabernacle, barking at it, pawing at it and whining to their masters. The dogs wanted to see who was hiding inside the little golden box!

They found a real, living person in the tabernacle – JESUS!!

FOLLOWING IN HIS FOOTSTEPS



Step Back, Pause, and Reflect!

The word "RETREAT" can be explained as a dedicated period of withdrawal from our everyday routine and environment to focus on spiritual growth. We take an intentional pause from the demands and distractions of daily life to strengthen our relationship with Jesus and open our hearts to be transformed by the Holy Spirit.

Right after Easter, this is exactly what I decided to do. Like most of us, I've been on many preached or guided retreats; I'm looking forward to our regional retreat in August. Right now, however, I decided that it would be heavenly to just step back, pause, and reflect. So, that's exactly what I did. I traveled to the Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale, AZ, for a four-day private, self-guided retreat.



Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine



Blessed Sacrament Chapel

You might ask, "How did you know what to do?" I really did not know, but I decided that I wanted to pray as I do every day but more intentionally, with more focus, fewer distractions, longer intervals for reflection, and more time to listen to the Holy Spirit.

I don't usually have the luxury of spending time savoring the psalms while praying the Liturgy of the Hours before morning Mass, or at midday after lunch, in the evening, and before bed. While on retreat, those hours were key in organizing my day. Somehow, I imagine that this is just what the Church intends.

Taking the time to pray the Rosary and really think about the mysteries without having other cares pressing in is a gift. I was also able to take time to read and listen to spiritual material that had been waiting a long time to be read and heard. And finally, I had time just to be quiet.

In the adoration chapel and Holy Spirit contemplation chapel, I was able to spend uninterrupted time with Jesus. How moving it is to know that Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is waiting for you to enter a small chapel lit only by a sanctuary candle and the light that filters in from outside. (It's much more personal than visiting him in a large church.) It's so easy and pleasant to sit for an hour or more just being quiet and keeping our Lord company with no one waiting and no reason to hurry.

Getting to the contemplation chapel was an easy walk through an area filled with cactuses, a healing garden, where folks have left mementos and small statues of saints. There are shady places to sit, and you can also follow the Stations of the Cross. Upon entering the cool, dimly lit contemplation chapel, it was the perfect time to quiet my thoughts, read a little Scripture or other spiritual reading, or again, take some blessed time to reflect and listen to the Holy Spirit.

A special time for me right before dinner was spending time outside listening to the birds, visiting the flowers and the Our Lady of Guadalupe shrine, and appreciating the breeze which reminded me of the whisper of the Holy Spirit. The light in the Southwest at that time of day highlights the wonders of God's artistry.

I returned to NJ refreshed and renewed despite a twenty-hour wait in Phoenix airport due to the Newark flight cancellations. After my four days with Jesus, even that could not rattle me!

So, whether or not you can travel to Arizona, I highly recommend this sort of retreat in any beautiful spot. Take the time to pause, step back, and reflect. It is surely good for the soul!

Blessings for the remainder of the Easter season and Pentecost,

Diane, OFS

By Diane Menditto, OFS National Vice Minister



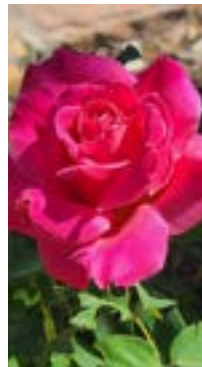
Cactus flower



Holy Spirit Contemplation Chapel



Our Lady of the Angels Church



Rose

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION



Calling for articles, poems, event photos

THE TROUBADOUR is a quarterly communication vehicle published by Our Lady of the Angels Region. It is published digitally.

The electronic format of The Troubadour is published quarterly: Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. It is available for downloading on our Regional website.

To become a subscriber, you must be an active, professed member, or candidate in formation of our region, and your complete e-mail address must be registered in our database.

Wherever you see the spirit of Saint Francis at work in the world, in your lives, in your fraternity, in its members, and in your hearts we want to hear from you. Come, share with us.

PUBLICATION DEADLINES:

All submissions for the next issue of The Troubadour, Fall 2025, are due to the Editor: smfranciscanministry@gmail.com by **August 15th.**

ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS:

- The right to copy all material printed in The Troubadour is granted provided you credit the Troubadour and author.
- When submitting articles for publication consideration, please state fraternity name and location, as well as your name and address.
- Photos are limited to 2 or 3. Some submitted photos will be used.

Because of our magazine article regional submission requirements, I am limited in the number of accepted submissions. Therefore, not all articles, poems or event images can be published in the current edition. I will give consideration for future publication.

Franciscan Resources



Scan to visit our
Region homepage



GOSPEL-
TO-LIFE-
Bookstore



OFS USA
Website



TAU
PUBLISHING
Bookstore

Click on icon to visit webpage

Inspirational SAINTS

ST. VERONICA GIULIANI



1660-1727

FEAST DAY: July 9

"You are the heart of my heart."

St. Veronica Giuliani

Having filled the office of novice mistress during a space of 22 years, Veronica was unanimously elected abbess. Only in obedience could she be prevailed upon to accept the responsibility.

Purified more and more by many sufferings, to which she added many austere mortifications, she went to her eternal reward on July 9, 1727, after spending 50 years in the convent. Saint Veronica Giuliani was one of the rare saints who had received the stigmata. Whenever the wounds were opened, Fr. Salvatori recorded that "they emitted so delicious a fragrance throughout the whole of the convent that this alone was sufficient to inform the nuns whenever the stigmata had been renewed."

The saint's body remained incorrupt for many years until it was destroyed in a flood. Her bones are now kept in a composite figure of the saint, the skull of which is covered with wax. Her heart, though, is still incorrupt, and is kept in a separate reliquary.

Because of her heroic virtues and the many miracles that were continually being worked at her tomb, she was canonized by Pope Gregory XVI in 1839.

**from: The Franciscan Book of Saints, ed.
by Marion Habig, ofm*

